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THE INTRIGUERS:

OR,

PEVENSEL.

A ROMANCE OF THE BARONS' WAR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

EDWARD TURNER.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

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THE INTRIGUERS:

OR,

PEVENSEL.

CHAPTER I.

“ I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through briar ;
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless boar, sometime a fire ;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire at every turn.”
Midsummer Night's Dream.

It is scarcely possible to imagine a greater transformation than this awkward blow produced on the inmates of Pevensel, and particularly on its

noble Lord. Men, indulging in petty acts of tyranny, blinded either by prosperity or natural arrogance, are most effectually checked in the excess of their relentless bearing, when overtaken by some sudden calamity. With care-worn looks Savoy entered into a repetition of Emmeline's disclosures, also treating De Meudon to a confidential communication concerning the steps taken to terminate her attachment towards Sandford. But instead of angry resentment and unkind anathemas, his expressions spoke remorse and anxiety; pity for the unfortunate young lady again in a position of danger, and regret for the rash proceeding taken against her former protector. These sentiments were fully shared by the young exquisite, who, with all his superficial accomplishments, possessed a high sense of honour. But, what was more important, they were overheard by the faithful Conisburgh, then not far distant.

With a promptness of action which would have done credit to a more cultivated mind, the young servant immediately followed the messenger bearing the obnoxious scroll. When, finding him proof against any of the persuasive allurements by which he urged a return to Pevensel, he left that functionary with the woman Margot, who had been dispatched with intelligence to Sandford. Then he hastened back, barely escaping the approaching forces of his old master. On arriving at the Castle he found De Meudon already engaged in preparations for a vigorous defence, the noble Lord of Savoy being too disconcerted to render much assistance.

Amongst Gloucester's numerous staff of retainers, there was not a more zealous servant than Peter Lounton. Dressed as a simple rustic, he journeyed with his extraordinary companion, frequently indebted to her management for escape from capture by Rochfort's stragglers,

who then thickly covered the adjacent country. Compelled at last to seek shelter for the night in a dense thicket, he conversed with the old Sibyl, partly to allay irrepressible fears, while he gratified the wonderment of curiosity. He concluded, somewhat correctly, that his guide was slightly insane, though it was a madness tempered with considerable method.

“ I pray thee, good mother,” said Lounton, “ lead me a safe road where these relentless foes can neither follow nor threaten to frustrate the accomplishment of my journey. You are probably acquainted with the wild bogs in which they would scarce dare to venture.”

“ Follow me now,” answered Margot, “ and I will lead you over the wildest bogs on which the sun ever shines. Sometimes as a man, sometimes a woman I’ll meet the dreaded foe, and persuade them to spare your grizzly beard; nor

do I rest till we behold Wigmore, be it one mile, two, or a hundred."

"Surely mother you are in jest," replied the messenger. "Such a journey would bring your old frame to perdition long before its termination. Once clear of this dangerous country I soon take to horse, and when one animal flags procure another until my pilgrimage is accomplished as far as Winchester at least; eating when compelled by hunger, drinking if prompted by thirst, when time or chance afford a fitting leisure."

"It matters not," rejoined Margot. "Either as horse or hound, I will first reach Wigmore, while you, a lazy groom, still loiter on the road."

"Woman, thou art mad," said the messenger, "a believer in imaginary visions, a dreamer of dreams. From whence could such a hag procure a horse?"

“From the skies,” answered Margot; “one that can fly as fast as wind, like the raging din of strife, now approaches, which shall surely lead to happier times.”

“Then your imagination pictures a horse fallen from the clouds to carry you as fast as a fool’s tongue,” returned the messenger.

“Not only to carry me on his back, but even the destiny of all mankind,” answered Margot. “Yesternight as I crossed the barren heath a dark cloud arose in the distant horizon in shape like a rearing horse. A vivid flash of lightning illumed its dull and blackened hues. Then rolled a single peal of crashing thunder, speaking words of coming war. Suddenly a rushing wind dispelled this huge apparition, and the fading beams of a setting sun shone calmly o’er old Pevensel’s stony walls—but peace, be still—be still.”

The two wayfarers had not, as they supposed, entered the thicket unobserved. A small band of

armed men followed close on their track, but failing to discover them in the intricacies of the woodland waste they sat down on a small grass plot to regale themselves with creature comforts. Lounton afraid to move, stretched his length flat on the ground, while Margot peeped through a narrow vista dividing the copsewood, and deluding her companion with the idea that the hostile intruders had departed, she promised to keep watch while the weary messenger refreshed himself with a light and comforting sleep. Oh! sleep, how welcome are thy placid hours. In thee alone man forgets his worldly cares. There rests the unconscious fugitive, peacefully dreaming of some fair damsel far away. The old hag soon purloined the scroll forwarded by Savoy, and carefully concealed it under her garments. Then she hastily forsook the reclining swain, thus accosting his concealed enemies—

“Why slumber, you idle loons? the tempest

hovers around, its sable hues blackening hour by hour; beware lest your sleep grows into that long repose from whence none awake as creatures of this earth. Soon will rage the loudest storm that ever swept across this lovely island."

"What night owl in the human shape have we here," said the leader of the band, "who mutters gibberish about storms when the stars beam peacefully from a cloudless sky."

"It is not the storm of Heaven's wrath pouring forth its liquid fire from the clouds that I foretell," returned Margot, "I speak of war's alarms. But a few short months and your mangled form will lie in the dust beside your lifeless master."

"Peace, thou brawling hag," answered the leader, "vex me not by your wild jargon. Rather let it concern you to tell where that spy is hidden, unless he is already transformed by

your witchcraft into some monster of the brute creation. Speak quick, without evasion, or the flames shall transform your withered hide into corruption's blackened mass."

"My words are the signs of the heavens, no idle tales," answered Margot, "neither am I a worker of miracles, or soon should your unwelcome shape be changed. The youth is reclining within this thicket, you block the only entrance, escape will be impossible except his slumbers last longer than your patience."

"To exceed that, old night raven, he will sleep long enough in all conscience," rejoined the leader. "We have marched to besiege this Castle of Pevensel with a haste no lover yet displayed in seeking his mistress. I care not if we recline here until seven suns have shone and sunk to rest."

"Say rather that the fiend of Hurstingham, your master, hurries thither as sinners seek

iniquity," responded Margot. "Yet the signs are against him. Three nights since a wild cloud, shaped as a boar, stood in the sky obscuring the fairest stars which light the blue vault of heaven. Then arose the northern wind with chilly blast and dispelled its hideous form to the horizon of destruction. So will your lord stand before the walls of Pevensel, until a whirling storm shall disperse his distracted followers as clouds driven by the fury of a gale."

"Perchance we shall disappoint your expectations, my visionary friend," said the leader. "Clouds, like mortals, do not always speak truth. Still, sleep would be more agreeable than your gibberish, so begone, old owl, and should we meet again beware of my vengeance, unless we secure this hidden stripling who conveys messages of disaffection against our Royal Sovereign and the noble earl."

"I have little to dread," rejoined Margot.

“ We shall never cross each other again this side the grave. Believe in my prophetic words or not, as you please ; I shall ever follow you in questionable shape, little heeded and still less feared.”

While uttering these syllables the old hag tripped lightly away. This wretched monomaniac had cunning enough to perceive that the messenger's capture was an irretrievable certainty, so hoodwinking his pursuers she secured the important document, and walked across the whole breadth of England to convey it to Sandford, whom she knew to be in Gloucester's custody. Several weeks passed before she reached her destination. She trudged mostly by night, and remained in concealment during the brightest hours of the sunny days. In the course of the journey there was not a flying cloud that escaped her observation, its purpose being studied with reference to future events.

Some hours elapsed before sleepful lethargy had sufficiently refreshed the waking senses of the wondering messenger. Glancing vacantly around he had some confused recollection of an old woman talking about clouds, in tales not less vague and incomprehensible than his half-awakened ideas. Then rubbing his eyes, he stretched and yawned while sitting on the grass-covered earth. With a sudden dart of startled amazement he beheld the disordered pack, its contents scattered over the ground, the despatches gone, his companion vanished, and also his prospect of reward. Bewildered by this catastrophe he sprang upon his feet, and calling loudly for the old hag forgot the danger which caused their retreat into the thicket. These sonorous tones produced no effect whatever except to arouse the guards awaiting his retirement from repose. Hastily they rush into concealment, hiding behind the surrounding trees. The un-

happy swain collected the remnant of his baggage, and ran swiftly from the wood, and after gazing in every direction but the right, he stood motionless with thoughtful reflection, like a statue carved by the mason's chisel. In a few moments he determined to return to Pevensel, hoping for assistance from Conisburgh in the recovery of his loss ; but scarcely had he formed this brilliant idea before the ambuscade rushed suddenly upon their victim, like hounds seizing the jaded prey. He became a captive, wasting his days in idle detention as a suspected spy, until long after the renascent crops, then barely visible above the fertile ground, had ripened into laughing fruits.

CHAPTER II.

“Yet I argue not
Against heaven’s hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up, and steer
Right onward.”

MILTON.

WHILE Sandford was waiting in anxiety the return communication from Pevensel, the Earl of Leicester with his royal prisoners had arrived at Hereford. One morning, when the budding May trees scented the air with fragrant perfume, the restless captive was taking exercise within the limits permitted by his guards. A noble lord, approaching on a spirited charger, recognised him with many gestures of surprise, and de-

scended from the still prancing animal to greet an old acquaintance.

To the young adventurer's reflecting mind the die seemed now cast, which was to stamp the image of success on all his hopes. The stranger was Thomas de Clare, brother to the Earl of Gloucester, to whose charge the Prince was entrusted when placed under the restraint of a captive gaol. Sandford saw at once the desired opportunity to ingratiate himself with his present custodian, and to execute some measure for his royal master's release. But while these reflections disturbed his mind, with the heavy sound of several footsteps, Gloucester himself came forward to receive his brother, accompanied by several retainers and the old woman Margot, whose extraordinary appearance so excited Sandford's curiosity, that he, for the moment, forgot the immediate purpose which kindled so much enthusiasm within his loyal breast.

After the first astonishment had passed, the Earl and his brother conversed a short distance from the bystanders, at length calling Sandford to join their conference. Such are the changing fortunes of human life. It was an impressive scene when Gloucester welcomed the young man as a valuable ally, expressing deep regret that in ignorance he had been guilty of discourteous harshness towards one most highly esteemed by the scion of royalty, whose cause he had now espoused.

But scarcely were these compliments expressed, before another stately cavalcade, coming proudly over the distant mounds, attracted general notice. All eyes were instantly bent towards this well-ordered force. It exhibited a brilliant pageant and warlike mien, that added considerably to the numerous army already assembled, and loud were the acclamations which welcomed their arrival. Here now was presented a magnificent

array collected from all quarters of the kingdom, and Sandford soon found himself in close conversation not only with Gloucester and his brother, but also with the Lord of Croft, and Mortimer, who led this newly-arrived troop. There stood the worthy youth, lately an outcast, a wandering fugitive, escaping narrowly from day to day the most relentless pursuers. He was now regarded as the hope of a momentous and important enterprise, not only changing the destinies of the country, but opening some faint chance that his own individual ambition might attain a happy consummation, though a short time previous almost abandoned in despair.

“You are right welcome, noble sirs,” said Gloucester. “These are not times to be scrupulous. The safety of our possessions is at stake. These papers, received this morning by a mysterious hand, inform me that Mountfort besieges Savoy’s Castle at Pevensel, the domain being

already confiscated. Heaven knows our own may soon share the same fate."

"Mountfort besieges Pevensel!" exclaimed Sandford. "Tell me, I pray, by what force he is supported."

"You seem really earnest," answered Gloucester. "He is backed by Rochfort de Vere, who is already bribed by promises that Pevensel shall become his future stronghold; but it is here our work must be done. We can render no aid, even if the Castle has not now surrendered."

"I fear it not," said Croft. "The young knight, De Meudon, defends it to the last extremity."

"It is incomprehensible," said Gloucester. "Papers handed to my messenger since he quitted Pevensel have reached me by the hand of that old woman (pointing to Margot); yet no scroll from Savoy. How the old sinner became possessed of them I know not, except by her

jabbered hallucinations about dropping from the clouds."

"My lords, let us arouse ourselves to the necessities of the times," said Sandford. "Soon will Oppression's heavy hand be laid on all your honours. The whole atmosphere of this country is tainted with crime worse than murder itself. Though danger's steepest rocks bar the way I go at once to Pevensel. Here let the blow be struck, and the Prince himself must lead the way."

"Oh! that he who judgest all things could thus persuade his soul!" exclaimed Thomas de Clare. "With him conscience is a gracious jewel, and, faithful to his oath, he remains in restraint, nor does the man breathe upon this earth who could dissuade him from these solemn vows."

"Is it possible that I could speak a word in his ear," rejoined Sandford.

"There is a way if you have a will to follow

my directions," answered De Clare. "Nominally the Prince is still in my custody; go you as an officer of my guard, tell him how I repudiate my charge, that our forces are here stronger than supposed, waiting the prestige his presence alone can afford to rouse them to immediate action, and leave him not until your arguments prevail."

"It is no sooner said than done," answered Sandford. "At to-night's moonlight hour I start away. Conceal an armed ambuscade behind the hill of Tulington, and the adventure is accomplished."

"When," cried Mortimer, "one shall keep watch on the hill, while others in strong force are hidden in the woods. Name the time, and we are there."

"To-morrow evening," answered Sandford.

"It is agreed," returned Mortimer. "My Lord of Croft will wave his bonnet on the mound when all is ready."

While Gloucester and his brother retired, Sandford, Mortimer, and the Lord of Croft again pledged themselves to this undertaking for the Prince's rescue. When the enterprising youth departed to prepare for his journey, he determined first to seek the Prince, then to cross the breadth of England for Pevensel, trusting yet to concert some measure for Lady Emmeline's safety. On passing the woman Margot, the old hag made a dumb movement expressive of confidential silence, and placed in Sandford's hand a written scroll. The young man regarded her with hasty looks of surprise, and, taking the paper, read Savoy's words denouncing him as a worthless impostor.

These harsh and ungrateful words produced a deeper impression on the young man's mind than he had ever experienced through the vicissitudes of a short but eventful life ; still his undaunted spirits rose with the occasion. For some time he

stood ruminating in wonderment at the contents of that extraordinary epistle, brought to his hand in so remarkable a manner, and turning round to make some enquiries into the mystery, the old woman had vanished.

With reflection the truth soon gleamed in its reality. Urged by his words Emmeline had made her uncle acquainted with their attachment, and such resentment was a result by no means unexpected. But it was enough, the fair lady was again in danger ; even should their ultimate union prove an utter impossibility, he had promised to watch over her in all troubles, which undertaking he determined to fulfil, daring every danger, Savoy's anger included. How was this to be accomplished ? by what means could he speak a few comforting words to the harassed maiden ? The Castle was beleaguered. Still o'er seas that are deepest love can find the way. Yet faithful to his word he must first see the Prince. A blow

struck in that quarter might even necessitate the withdrawal of the forces before Pevensel. He hoped that some bold design would present itself by which he should triumph emphatically over the evil machinations of that same demon in the human shape, whom he had once already outmanœuvred—a man by custom and profession destitute of all patriotism, whose stronghold at Hurstingham was daily becoming an object of hatred, and experiencing that weariness which indulgence always brings in course of time, the servants were deserting in large numbers.

CHAPTER III.

“What generous man can live with that constraint
Upon his soul to bear, much less to flatter
A court like this? Can I soothe tyranny?
Seem pleased to see my Royal Master murdered,
His crown usurped, a distaff on the throne,
A council made of such as dare not speak
And could not if they durst! Whence honest men
Banish themselves, for shame of being there,
A government which knowing not true wisdom
Is scorned abroad, and lives on tricks at home.”

DRYDEN.

IF not by individual enthusiasm alone, it is generally through the ardour of a few persons that important movements, influencing the destiny of mankind, are finally attained. Animated with this spirit Sandford held a further brief con-

ference with the Lord of Croft and Mortimer, while the first stars of eve gleamed from the blue vault of heaven's canopy. Then mounting a restive charger he rode away across the meadows into a dense forest, where the wide spreading foliage added a deeper gloom to the still darkening hours of night. After alternately threading his way through the intricate woods, and tearing through the long grass which covered the open country, the adventurer arrived at a running stream, at first but a few inches in depth but increasing towards the opposite bank. There, immersed nearly to the horse's neck and entangled in the growing reeds, the rider's situation was even more critical than on the occasion of his journey to Pevensel, when in the stranger's hut he sought shelter from the fury of contentious elements.

At length by desperate plunges the steed reached the opposite bank, and refreshed by the

cooling waters dashed so rapidly along the flat country that the town of Hereford was soon visible in the distance. The naked trunk of a dead tree stretched its rotted arms over the surrounding turf. It broke suddenly upon the view like a spectre in the morning mist. The horse was now completely unmanageable, requiring Sandford's whole attention, when bounding under a tree, which the young man had not perceived, the rider's head came in forcible contact with an overhanging bough and he lay senseless on the ground. Some troopers exercising in the early morning hours accidentally discovered the prostrate traveller, though it was some time before he was sufficiently restored to inform their leader that he came from Thomas de Clare with letters for the Prince.

These troops were some of the appointed guards over the Prince under De Clare's superintendence, and the defection of that nobleman to his brother

being as yet unsuspected, Sandford was soon conducted to his Royal Master's presence, consoling himself that the late misfortune had possibly given him a facility of access to the object of his search, which otherwise he might not have attained without considerable risk, and many awkward cross questions.

A year had just rolled through its varied seasons since Sandford parted from England's heir on the heights of Dover, but despite the garb of De Clare's retainers and a weather beaten countenance, the recognition was not less immediate than cordial. A melancholy seemed to affect the Prince's spirits, requiring decided efforts from an enthusiast to awaken the former vigour of a determined mind. How soon can the noblest soul be crushed by isolation and restraint which, once removed, so deep is the worship of liberty innate in human nature, that a restoration

to freedom soon adds new fuel to the fire of suppressed zeal—

“Oh ! ye loud waves, and Oh ! ye forests high,
And Oh ! ye clouds that far above me soared ;
Thou rising sun, thou blue rejoicing sky,
You everything that is and will be free,
Bear witness for me, wheresoe’er ye be,
With what deep worship I have still adored
The spirit of divinest liberty.”

COLERIDGE.

With soul invigorated to the importance of the occasion, Sandford met his Royal master. The apartment within the Castle of Hereford was of the plainest description, a large oaken table occupied the centre, consuming so much space that only a small path, strewn with rushes, was available round the side of this cumbrous piece of furniture. The walls were hung with helmets and shields fastened between crossed spears, which, polished by some careful hand, glistened brightly even in the dullness of a gloomy and unfrequented banquet-room. A few seats were placed near an ample lattice, which served for the admittance of

light and air, though the general aspect of this minor hall was dull and sombre. Here the young men conversed, the inferior urging his views upon the superior with energy and heartfelt anxiety.

“Most puissant and illustrious master,” said Sandford, “once again I speak the desire of all my countrymen, with inflamed heart, though with feeble words. We are not so poor in valour as to despise the wrongs suffered by every honest man, nor let us separate till we have devised some measure for redress.”

“My good servant and faithful friend,” answered the Prince, “your daring is almost tantamount to foolhardiness. Even courage is worthless unless tempered by reason. The bitterness of rash boldness I have endured, when in seeking revenge on the field at Lewes, I brought destruction on my own head. Why on England’s shores? Regret if you please the prevalence of the

usurper's power, but if discovered, by thy cruel death shall I have to rue such folly."

"I despise all such danger," returned Sandford. "Can I rest in idleness and see my master's crown defiled by those who live on the trickery of self-aggrandisement and gain? Their acts render my country a byword to all nations of the earth. A force of brave followers is now collected, which shall, by heaven's help and your guidance, hew up the tree of oppression to its very root. Haste at once to join them, Gloucester already unfurls the royal banner, and your presence will soon add to the thousands ready to fight in so good a cause."

"Flatter me not with these superficial tales," rejoined the Prince, "I am watched day and night. Every movement reported to my unrelenting captors, who hoodwink the multitude with pretended exhibitions of my freedom, though daily the restraint is more vigilant and irksome."

“The greater the danger the greater should be our courage,” replied Sandford. “One effort of your former spirit can remove all these strong impediments. You exercise this evening in the Widemarsh. Watch well the hill of Tulington. When my Lord of Croft waves his bonnet, haste to join him, for a force under Mortimer awaits behind the mound, which will swallow up your guards like a hawk devours the sparrow.”

“The means that heaven yields must not be neglected,” said the Prince. “Yet must we be cautious. One more failure will bring our glory down like meteors fallen from the western sky, to be extinguished in the base earth below.”

“Fear not, all is in readiness,” returned Sandford.

“Thanks, my good friend, for thy zeal,” continued the Prince. “Yet there is the impediment of conscience. The dread of heaven’s vengeance. From week to week have I

sworn a solemn oath to remain a faithful hostage."

"Speak not of fidelity to those who daily break its conditions," rejoined Sandford. "Men rarely make promises, except it is qualified by some condition. You engaged to remain inactive and obedient; your opponents to shew justice and mercy; but instead of justice behold wrong, and mercy is superseded by oppression. If, regardless of self-interest, you are content to risk a future crown, still be not deaf to the cries of desolation, which must daily reach your ears. Neglect not this opportunity, and you will live for ever blest with the gratitude of an admiring people, while in captivity your name will soon be forgotten, or remembered only as a scorn and reproach."

"Your words seem to infuse vigour to my breast, though spoken in plain and unassuming language," returned the Prince.

“If needed it will be my duty to be even plainer,” said Sandford. “Even should I perchance incur your immediate displeasure, hereafter will you remember my counsels with joy or remorse as your present resolutions may create.”

“I forgive thee,” answered the Prince. “But tell me where is De Clare, the companion of my daily walks, he now entirely absents himself?”

“He will not return again,” said Sandford. “He is already in arms with his brother for your cause, awaiting at Wigmore the gratification of your royal presence.”

“I require to hear no more,” said the Prince. “My Lord of Croft shall not wave his bonnet in vain; and thy reward, my most esteemed follower, shall be the highest honours a Prince can bestow upon a faithful subject. But dare no more such open danger, hide now in safety until this tyranny be overpast.”

“Heaven forbid that I should remain in the idleness of useless seclusion,” replied Sandford, “I have yet another enterprise, the accomplishment of which involves even greater hazard.”

“Take heed what you do,” exclaimed the Prince, “a week since I heard you mentioned as a proclaimed prize; be content, already your achievements are sufficient to ensure the highest favours, when my power is again restored.”

“How can honest men rest content, while treachery threatens the fairest in the land?” rejoined Sandford, “I have intelligence which causes my bosom to ache day and night. De Montfort, and Rochfort de Vere, beleaguer the Castle at Pevensel; I hasten to aid Savoy with my advice, and to ensure the safety of his fair niece.”

“A most honourable enterprise,” said the Prince, “and I believe you equal to the task. Tis villainy so foul that even Savoy’s possessions

are in peril. I was promised faithfully they should remain intact."

"Most assuredly, my Royal master," returned Sandford. "Yet you would scruple to break a promise made to those who act with such faithless perfidy. Nay, I tell you more, to buy the support of Rochfort de Vere, your enemies engage to betray into his licentious grasp the Lady Emmeline de Savoy. Once already by stratagem have I saved her from his brutality, and Heaven grant I may be in time to do so again."

"You have destroyed all my scruples at once," said the Prince; "tell me, however, how can I render any aid."

"Get yourself in readiness hastily to seize this chance of escape!" answered Sandford. "Strike some blow here, so effectual, that Leicester will be compelled to draw away the forces from Pevensel for his support!"

“ I will not fail to do my part,” rejoined the Prince ; “ but pardon me, you seem to have an interest in this lady deeper than ordinary gallantry would prompt ?”

“ It is there, my Royal master, I have most cause to fear your anger,” replied Sandford. “ In the folly of youthful indiscretion I have indulged a vain and profitless ambition, so imaginative as to aspire to the hand of that fair lady. But, in imploring forgiveness, I am not without reason to hope that the services I have already rendered may somewhat atone for such rash presumption.”

“ A most honourable ambition,” answered the Prince ; “ I hear it not in anger, but with joy, a fitting reward for your energy and genius. How is Savoy affected in the matter ?”

“ Most harshly towards me, I dread,” returned Sandford. “ He has even sought to betray me—an act of which I have reason to believe he is

now ashamed. So must I regard the pride of my life as hopeless, and have but endeavoured to serve your Highness in disaster, and the lady in her trouble."

"We must converse upon this again," said the Prince, laying his hand on Sandford's shoulder. "Be assured of my influence should Savoy remain obstinate. Now, get you gone; a longer interview at this moment will raise suspicion. Heaven bless the consummation of your desires, and speed your present undertaking."

Many ambitious conceptions, that offer at first a superficial prospect of realization, end in disappointment, if not in positive disaster. Such will generally be the result attending all ideas conceived in a vain spirit, contrary to the laws of God and man. But our young hero's desires violated no principle on which human greatness can alone rest with security. Offensive only to

the empty pride of fancied distinction, and though for a long time apparently hopeless, they seemed progressing, step by step, to some degree of ultimate probability. He could not refrain from drawing fancy's picture of his future life when surrounded by danger, and while his heart was haunted with horrible apprehensions. Pevensel had been beleaguered for some weeks. It might be reduced by positive starvation, and the fair prize for ever lost. Yet Sandford's spirit seemed to rise with reflection. He trusted to reach the spot in time—a work not of hours, but weeks—to find a way through the forces surrounding the castle by some of those measures that true devotion only can suggest to raise the ardour of its inmates, and, at the last extremity, to devise some measure for the lady's safety. To detail the hairbreadth escapes which he daily encountered would become tedious by repetition. It must suffice to say that, compelled to rest for

one or two days through the shock of his recent accident, he again assumed the dress of a wandering knight and the name of De Bourdon, and proceeded across the country with that constant circumspection which the difficulties of the road and watchful foes rendered indispensable. While he steadily pursued his course, despair and terror reigned within the old walls of Pevensel ; its inmates were threatened with the deepest and most barbarous calamities.

That love of sport, which for centuries has been hereditary in English minds, afforded opportunity for the execution of the plan concerted for the Prince's escape. Taking exercise with his guards in the Widemarsh—a meadow near Hereford—besides other amusements, a proposal was made to try the speed of their horses ; the Royal captive judiciously reserved the strength of his spirited charger, at length making a run which elicited the applause of the beholders. It was a little

before sunset the Lord of Croft, riding on a grey steed, appeared on Tulington hill, waving his bonnet. The Prince perceived the signal and galloped off, hotly pursued by his keepers. The chase was becoming exciting, when Mortimer emerged from the woods, put the guards to flight, and conducted the escaped fugitive to Wigmore. Next day the Prince proceeded to Ludlow, and entered into an alliance with Gloucester to crush the power of the usurping baron. This circumstance has been fully detailed in the records of history, but we have deemed it necessary to recapitulate, as briefly as possible, an event which influenced not only the immediate, but even the future destiny of England's subjects for many succeeding generations. Nor from this time forth can it be said that treason or conspiracy ever permanently flourished within this happy land, whatever strife may have arisen from political contentions, or motives of private interest.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Yet ere thou speak'st, a moment's pause of thought,
If your disclosures should appear to be
Conjectures only, and almost I fear
They will be nothing further—spare them ! I
Am not in that collected mood at present
That I could listen to them quietly.”

THE PICCOLOMINI.

WILD as our hope and deep as our despair. No shipwrecked mariner, whose distracted bark, dashed on the beetling rock, was slowly foundering in the dead of night, could be haunted with greater terrors than the desponding inmates of Pevensel. Within those beleaguered walls, the startling occurrences that agitated the outer world were

involved in mystery, like the hidden pages of a sealed book. Weary their days of toil, dreary the watchful nights, until privation had dismayed the stoutest hearts, and all necessities of life would be exhausted in two days.

A load of sorrow oppressed the noble Lord of Savoy, even deeper in significance. It grew daily. The danger by which he was surrounded did not simply involve loss of possessions or worldly honour. It involved more. Ruin and degradation to the beautiful and innocent girl, on whom he yet doted as a beloved child. She had displeased him—deeply displeased him—by the declaration of her affection, by a violation of confidence in its concealment, and by repugnance to De Meudon's advances. Still, he could not bear to think of her with resentment. The simplicity of her nature had so impressed his heart, he reflected with bitterness on the misery he had already inflicted, from which she had

been rescued by one, even now, regarded with scorn.

But this was not all. That pure and confiding girl was again on the verge of destruction. He thought of the woes endured by his departed friend's daughter, yet unavenged. What could avert a similar fate? Nothing but that despised youth's energies. He alone could organize a diversion for relief in the present emergency. That hope was gone.

"I myself," thought Savoy, "have signed his death warrant. In my anger I consigned him to perdition, and brought the worst of earthly calamities on the purest of human minds."

Overpowered with these reflections, he shunned his niece's presence. The sight of her calm and hopeful resignation bewildered his senses. He avoided her for several days, until laid on a bed of sickness. Then he sent for her, in agony, to

implore forgiveness, and to receive her comfort in grief's sad hour.

It is difficult to penetrate the mysteries of another's heart ; we are too often at a loss to comprehend our own. Where is Lady Emmeline ? She is alone save one favourite domestic. Her hours seem one continued round of prayer, supplication, and tearful remorse. Marvellous that so tender a form could endure this galling load without withering like the verdant leaf, when seared by autumnal blasts. But so it is. The weakest can often bear misery to its furthest extremity, when the conscience is void of offence. Prompted by Conisburgh, she had reason to believe that the scroll sent by her uncle would never reach any eye but one, the one it was intended to blight for ever. But weeks had passed away, and no apparent succour.

Still she thought on the past. When leaving the convent, in charge of Conisburgh, then un-

known, was not the flickering lamp of hope expiring in its last embers? Yet was she saved. Might it not be so again? But her uncle, what would be his feelings? He might pity while danger was imminent, but that once overpast, what would be his sentiments when he found his scroll had been intercepted? She sincerely trusted it was. She might then share his resentment, and be charged with duplicity and connivance. All was doubt and uncertainty, which heaven's own good time would reveal; she offers a brief prayer, and then sinks on slumber's pillow, peacefully dreaming of happier days. The messenger now delivers her uncle's desire for her presence, and she is aroused.

As the besiegers endeavoured to reduce the castle by starvation, De Meudon's duties became matters of daily routine rather than bodily exertion. He always assured himself that every loophole was carefully watched, and then retired

to his reflections. For some weeks he had never seen the fair lady, whose protector he now considered himself. For three days no interview with the noble lord. The failing supplies seemed to arouse his senses. Something must be done, but what that something was to be he had no very accurate conception.

Always entertaining a hope that circumstances would revive the probability of an alliance with Lady Emmeline, it would be idle to conceal this fact, still, he would rather the consummation had resulted from creditable than dishonourable means. The denouncement of Sandford he deeply regretted in all sincerity of heart ; but the deed was done, and he imagined it could not be recalled. If mistaken in the reason, the fond Knight was not blind to the fact that the lady had lately avoided his society. He could solely attribute it to a suspicion that he was an accomplice in the design for her lover's destruction to

serve his own purposes. He determined to remove this impression, if possible, and to persuade the fair one to escape with him into France, though by what plan this deliverance was to be effected remained a profound mystery. He had long projected a consultation with her uncle on the subject; but the prospect of that careworn veteran offering any practical suggestions was very slight. In this intention the young aspirant stands by the sick lord's couch, while the maiden reclines in peaceful rest.

“How fares my Lord to-night?” began De Meudon. “May Heaven grant a fortunate issue to our perplexities !”

“This bodily infirmity grows from a mind diseased,” answered Savoy. “My thoughts are constant on that unhappy child. Better she had died in infant sickness than have lived to see this day. I might have indulged a selfish sorrow, but its pangs would have laid lightly on my soul,

compared to these miseries inflicted by my own rashness."

"Say not so, my Lord," replied De Meudon, "nor grieve that so priceless a jewel is spared to adorn this castle. Take now a bowl of wine to revive your drooping spirits, and let us be in earnest. The lady must be removed from this castle. She may quit all that is dear; but to remain means starvation."

"You speak bitter words," answered Savoy; "I had hoped you sought me to impart some tidings of deliverance. I fear I have debarred every probability by denouncing that worthy youth."

"I grieve that you lent yourself in angry haste to such an act," continued De Meudon. "But it is passed, and the lady's succour, to which we are bound by every tie of duty and affection, devolves on us alone. Even had that young man known our danger, his single strength would

avail little against the forces which surround this stronghold."

"He has generally proved equal to most emergencies," returned Savoy, "though I will never regard him as my niece's future lord. There is, doubtless, an end of that ; but I would it had been accomplished by some less objectionable means. If you deem yourself able to effect the lady's rescue, I beseech you at once to acquaint me with your plans ; I will not only urge them upon her, but insist on compliance."

"My scheme is that your niece now consents to accept my hand," replied De Meudon, "and daring every peril, should escape with me to France. Rid of her presence, you could far better negotiate with these enemies. Her cherished love dreams are now vanished. She will surely comply, rather than fall in the grasp of De Vere."

"The idea pleases me well," said Savoy ; "but

your plans are like the oil without the essence. By what means could the flight be attempted with any prospect of success?"

"Leave that for my consideration until to-morrow," ejaculated De Meudon. "I trust to shew myself worthy of your honourable confidence."

"I would be a willing help-mate," answered Savoy, calmly, "yet I could not consent to risk the perpetration of some great error afterwards irretrievable. But, soft, here comes my niece; we will gather her feelings on the subject."

"Oh! uncle, we are not lost yet!" exclaimed the agonised girl, gliding swiftly across the chamber, and weeping on her guardian's bosom. "There are two more days. Despair not; trust to the God of battles, who can fight for the weak against the strong. There is one mortal dear to my heart, who may still become an humble instrument for our salvation on earth. There is one

above who can guide our souls to heaven. Bear lightly this load of grief for my sake, and still look upward."

While Savoy kissed that fair face, while sorrow's tear moistened that maiden eye, De Meudon stood silent and watchful. In spite of himself, he seemed to realise the shadowy emptiness of his proposal. Failing both in heart and voice, he abstained from interruption, and looked mournfully on the sick guardian and his fair ward."

"My child, I fear you are lost," said Savoy, after a long, impressive pause. "The one on whom your heart is set, to my grief and sorrow, can avail nothing. Think no more of him. Now it is time to banish such dreams. Would that I could be the protector of one so naturally dear; but I am old and feeble,—seek another. Yet, forgive me, I earnestly implore you, if, by denouncing that youth in my angry moments, I have removed one vague chance of safety."

“To forgive is Christian duty,” answered Emmeline, “an angel virtue that heaven has enjoined to check the arrogance of human frailty. But I can do more than that—I could even forget, if your relenting heart is willing to appreciate that young friend as he deserves.”

“Yet, willing to consider him a friend, I scorn any nearer alliance,” returned Savoy, somewhat warmly. “Provoke not my anger again by even a hint at such disgrace. Though why need I speak? he is lost for ever, and I deplore it.”

“Even in this time of adversity there is the leaven of pride in your aged heart,” resumed Emmeline. “I mention this no more. It is sealed for ever in my own bosom. What heaven decrees it will work out in its own way. My beloved guardian, let us trust it has already frustrated your cruel act; I have reason to hope that fatal scroll was intercepted.”

“It is a dream, a vain delusion,” returned

Savoy. "Confide not in it, my beloved child. If we must part by necessity let it be in affection. Trust to this fond youth for succour my aged arm cannot give. Fly with him to France, and seek there the safety these walls no longer afford."

"Decide now at once," exclaimed De Meudon, most energetically. "Oh! linger not until it is too late. Give me now a right to protect you, a right to call you mine. Think no more on past fancies. I bear no ill to any one, much less to one on whom you have bestowed an imaginary affection. Be assured he is gone for ever, so trust to me, or your misery I forbear to contemplate."

"Your designs are cruel and unjust," returned Emmeline. "You take advantage of my danger to enforce selfish ends, proposing an escape you are powerless to carry out. I trust it not, but confide in heaven; it's angel-care alone can give

me help, and there is but one on earth at whose bidding I would consent to quit this castle."

"I meant nothing dishonourable," replied De Meudon; "you do me the extremity of unkindness. I had hoped that these watchful days and nights would have bound our friendship with closer ties."

"I have the greater esteem for you as a friend," answered Emmeline, "though your efforts have not yet accomplished our deliverance."

"Should they do so," replied the young knight; "could I not urge an equal claim to your gratitude as that worthy franklin, in whose destruction, believe me, I am innocent of any participation?"

"I know you to be innocent in that matter," rejoined Emmeline; "but your own words have told me that gratitude alone will not determine where our affections are rightly due. You can

never reach a higher station in my regard by proposing rash attempts at flight, which I am assured my beloved guardian could not approve."

"Blame me not if I refuse to remain satisfied," answered De Meudon. "Your utter ruin will follow unless you have confidence in me. This obstinacy enforces a necessity I would rather have avoided; I must appeal to your guardian to add his positive commands to my entreaties."

"Oh! think, my dearest uncle," exclaimed Emmeline; "think well before you speak an unkind behest, and render me miserable for ever."

"I am mystified," said Savoy, after some consideration. "It would lighten my bosom could I be certain the projected escape had a sound prospect of success. I must withhold commands at present; for God forbid I should again endanger this child's honour by any hasty act."

"Of that we will talk further," returned De Meudon; "time presses for immediate action;

you promise your commands if I can arrange some safe retreat?"

"I should be inclined to do so," answered Savoy; "yet I doubt your ability to convince me."

"I am resolved to dare all dangers," said De Meudon, valiantly. "Before your fair niece shall become his prize, that fiend De Vere shall die by my hand; then in triumph I will seek my just reward."

"In that case you should claim the lady as your own," returned Savoy; "my peremptory commands would compel acquiescence."

"It is a sworn promise," said De Meudon, "I shall keep you to your word."

"Indulge not such empty, boastful pride," ejaculated Emmeline. "You trust in the strength of a single arm, I rely on heaven's care, and provoke not its holy wrath with self-confidence. I will remain here to the last, unless, in

unmanly rudeness, you overpower my feeble strength."

"I leave you to administer to your uncle's needs," said De Meudon; "think better of these unhappy resolutions. I feel positive you are shortly mine."

The young knight retired, while Emmeline, leaning on the aged lord's breast, again gave vent to passionate sorrow. Then rising, she gently bathed that heated brow, watching tenderly when stupor, rather than sleep, calmed for a time the dire apprehensions of a wandering brain. The early dawn found that weeping girl still acting the Good Samaritan to her senseless guardian, until consciousness was somewhat restored through her unremitting exertions. Then a feeble arm embraces the fair maiden's neck in thankful gratitude. A weak and faltering voice softly whispers in her attentive ear—"Oh! Emmeline, we may soon be parted for

ever, but heaven save you from that villain's power."

The prostrate sufferer's condition had so alarmed Lady Emmeline, that for the moment she forgot her terrors in the care of filial anxiety. Taught to esteem her guardian as a fond parent, from the hours of early innocence, when first the infant mind recognises those who deem its care their fondest solace, she was terrified, feeling deeply her fatal error. How joyfully she heard those aged lips again speak in tones that brought the past so vividly to recollection. She thought bitterly how often words of evasion, if not of positive deceit, had escaped her, to foster that concealment which seemed rather to have defeated its object than to have promoted her desires. Yet she was again addressed in the old affectionate strain ; " they might soon be parted for ever," if sympathy could avail, no time more fitting than the present, she determined to make

one last appeal, again urging the passion of her love, and should it fail she was equally resolved to mention it no more, while the vital spark continued in that aged frame; resting satisfied if she could only exact a promise that her inclinations should not be forced.

“Oh! my adored guardian, I rejoice to hear your words again,” exclaimed Emmeline, “yet more than ever I feel the comfort of hope, still a few hours may bring us to ruin, so grant me, I pray, one poor request.”

“You can speak, child,” answered Savoy, “if we are lost it can matter little whether I accede or refuse.”

“Then, should we still receive succour,” continued Emmeline, “and receive it from the one on whom alone, under heaven’s guidance, I place my reliance, will you not think of him as a benefactor, as more than a friend, as one to whom I am bound by every sacred tie?”

“ You wrong me again,” returned Savoy, “ taking advantage of present weakness to overcome my prejudice. I will not regard him otherwise than a friend, welcome to any reward my wealth can bestow, even if your imaginations are realized.”

“ These are not fit moments for angry words,” replied Emmeline, “ I engage faithfully to speak of him no more, to hide my affection in my bosom. You are willing to receive him as a friend, yet make me one promise more.”

“ I will do so,” said Savoy, “ my affection will prompt me to do so, provided my honour, or the fame of my fathers is in no way compromised.”

“ Oh! uncle, if you have such love for a disobedient child, for your child I shall ever be considered, if you can forgive while I can not only forgive, but even forget; force me not by positive commands into any alliance contrary to my desires.”

“I will promise,” answered Savoy, “if you are willing to make the sacrifice, and remain with me until the end of my days.”

“I will most cheerfully do so,” returned Emmeline, “if by Heaven’s help we are preserved; but will you, dearest uncle, faithfully and unconditionally do your part?”

“I will,” answered Savoy; “stay, I must make one reservation. If Rochfort should perish by De Meudon’s sword, my word is solemnly pledged.”

“I implore you not to indulge such vain and foolish thoughts,” said Emmeline. “It is by meekly trusting for the help which Heaven’s might can give, that we must look for safety. Oh! repeat not from this bed of sickness those words of boastful pride.”

“My oath cannot be recalled,” rejoined Savoy. I could only leave it to his generosity to relieve

me from my bond. It is of little consequence, all mortal friends have left us to our fate."

"All save one," returned Emmeline.

"You are still under the same delusions," replied Savoy. "What gives you reason to suppose my scroll was intercepted?"

"That good servant Conisburgh," said Emmeline, "accompanied the messenger across the levels, and had scarcely left him to return homeward before the unhappy man was surrounded by Rochfort's soldiers."

"Then you should not have concealed it from me," answered Savoy, warmly. "Oh! Emmeline what wickedness possesses your heart. Though we may both be in the wrong, still I have not deserved this. What could induce you to act so inconsiderately, violating every claim of duty and regard?"

"Oh! my guardian, remember what you have done," said Emmeline. "What terror you in-

flicted on my maiden heart. It is not fear that can beget the confidence of a young and timid mind. Your anger fills me with impenetrable dread. I have longed to tell you, but I dare not. There is no estrangement of our old love. I have sorrows from which you are free. Oh! uncle you can little appreciate the agony these thoughts have caused me under the influence of divided and irresistible affections."

"Oh! Emmeline, my beloved child, your words linger in my ear and bless thy truth," returned Savoy. "It is my unkindness that repels the loveliness of your gentle nature. Let us both forget the past, and remembering the pledges we have this day exchanged, live as one undivided heart bowed with earthly sorrow. My aged frame will soon be laid to rest, while thy beauty is yet in its prime. Vex me no more, and I will be to you a fond and loving guardian. But my voice is faint. Pour forth once more your supplications

to the heaven of heavens for help in this dreadful hour of need, and God in mercy grant your earnest petitions."

It was a solemn and impressive scene, when the first sunbeam pouring through the opened lattice fell on that tender form which knelt beside the sick veteran's bed. Those moistened eyes sparkle in its radiant gleam, while the lips utter sounds of contrite sorrow, that coming from the purity of an innocent heart could not fail to reach the throne of grace. At times she rose to administer words of comfort to her invalid guardian, the movement breaking his light and restless slumbers. How fond those caresses. Both seemed to receive comfort from these mutual assurances, until the blazing noon had passed and the grey evening light rendered those forms scarcely visible in its sombre shades. Then the attendant domestic, seizing a favourable opportunity, placed in those delicate hands, still clasped in

devotion, that same little token with which Conisburgh once before dispelled her fears on the last extremity of despair. A small scroll accompanied it, inscribed with these impressive words—"Remain close in the Castle—be trustful—my watchful care is over you." Those hopes were no longer the fancies of an empty vision. How could she impart the joyful news—she had promised to mention that name no more. Would that aged spirit relent under some prospect of succour, or would the arrogance of former pride return, too often the case when immediate danger is passed? Trembling she stood over the old man's bed, fearing to withhold the tidings. She might again be deemed deceptive and mistrustful. But no, it is not a fitting moment. Abject weariness had overcome the restless terror of despair. The old Lord sleeps, unconscious of the wild and joyful cries which burst from the distant hall.

When De Meudon quitted the sick Lord's

chamber he ascended the lofty battlements, and surveyed the surrounding enemies. Deep was his despair at any prospect of flight. "She is right," he thought. "It is impossible; I must meet that fiend, or the prize is lost to me. My hope is wild, but not impracticable." The livelong day was spent in this contemplative muse, until visiting an outwork in the fading light of evening a small band of minstrels, approaching a postern gate, excited the wonderment of his curiosity.

CHAPTER V.

“Angels of glory, came she not from you?
Are there not patriots in the heaven of heavens?
And hath not every seraph some dear spot
Throughout th’ expanse of worlds, some favourite home
On which he fixes with domestic fondness?”

Wolfe’s Remains.

It was in the earliest dawn of a summer morning, while Emmeline yet attended her sick guardian with delicate tenderness, that a vigorous eye watched the encamped forces from those lofty hills, which, ending the South Down range, overlook the marshes of Pevensey. But not the eye alone beamed with anxious thought. That heart

beat high; that soul swelled with emotions of enthusiasm—enthusiasms that true affection alone can create when its object is in immediate peril. At first Sandford's spirit sank when beholding the vast forces which prevented any nearer access to the spot whereon he gazed with domestic fondness. It could not be more effectually barred from approach had a tropical torrent gushed across those level plains.

How long Sandford would have remained in this contemplative mood, it is impossible to determine. His startled senses were awakened by tramping of horses, and a wild cry from the hostile riders, exclaiming, "A prize! a prize!" Nothing daunted, he mounted his nimble palfrey, and, dashing swiftly away, pursued by six troopers, rode along the ridge of hills which, stretching southwards towards the sea, terminate in that massive and well-known headland where the bare and perpendicular cliffs tower majesti-

cally o'er the rolling surge, its booming thunder diminishing to a sullen murmur on those stupendous heights, from whence a human form seems like a sparrow viewed from the house top.

Under ordinary circumstances the light steed would have completely distanced the troopers' chargers, encumbered with heavy trappings ; but wearied by long journeys its strength was gradually failing, the pursuers rapidly gaining ground after some miles had been travelled. They are now within a few yards of Sandford's rear, ejaculating their wild sounds, while the above-mentioned precipice threatened him in front. Still the young man's courage rose with emergency ; he suffered the panting animal to proceed almost to the brink of the cliff, then skilfully veering to the right galloped down a steep incline. The rushing foes in their eagerness dashed madly on, and were unable to bring their chargers to a stand until the two foremost had

fallen over the giddy height, the crash of their destruction sounding, after a considerable interval, like a little pebble dropped from the hand. Staggered with dismay, their companions immediately abandoned the chase.

All prospect of reaching Pevensel in that direction was at an end. Human endurance might have reached a similar extremity. The Castle might be lost, with all the terrible consequences that event must entail. So would it have remained had Sandford contented himself with indulging in vain boast like De Meudon, breathing destruction to enemies he had no means of reaching. He contemplated these impending disasters in coolness and deliberation, soon developing that brilliancy of genius which, despising all boastful vanity, lies in ready concealment within the hidden powers of the mind, as Nature's beauties are often hidden in the most sequestered dells.

The wary fugitive, hardly daring to look backwards, was ignorant of the dismay which had overtaken his followers. Flying onward still, he reached the old port of Seaford, where, disposing of the exhausted steed, he entered into an engagement with the owner of a small vessel ; and putting to sea, was impelled by a fresh southwestern breeze round the fatal promontory and across the adjacent bay. Here the little craft lay some two hours off the adored walls of Pevensel.

This brief space of time afforded Sandford leisure for meditation, which developed his brightest qualities. That penetrating mind soon perceived a fatal oversight which the attacking forces had committed, while De Meudon and all the valiant defenders on the verge of starvation were suffering themselves to sink in misery and desperation. The outlying waters on the surrounding marshes were so nearly approached at the full tide by the waves of the sea that all

access to the Castle in this direction was cut off, except by a narrow neck of land easily defended by a handful of crossbowmen.

In the midst of all perplexities, Sandford had good reason to believe that the withdrawal of the attacking forces would be rendered indispensable within ten days, owing to the numerous recruits that flocked to the Prince's standard. But that day might be the last. The garrison must be relieved with provisions. This might be done from the sea in the darkness of night. Still the co-operation of the besieged was requisite. How could they be communicated with? How could a few comforting words be sent to that loving and anxious maiden? There, sitting on the deck of the friendly vessel, Sandford spent another twenty minutes in contemplation, then, with a sudden, start of impulsive energy, he directed the pilot to steer for the Port of Hastings.

In the heat of a summer noon, the little bark

entered that old Cinque Port. But afraid to land where he was almost universally known, Sandford boarded a vessel that he had descried on the previous evening coasting towards that familiar haven. What pleasure exceeds the gratification of meeting old acquaintances fostered in earlier days of life? How convulsively that rough, but honest hand grasped Sandford's extended palm, inflicting bodily torture by the fervour of its squeeze. Thus was the adventurer welcomed by our old friend Peter Portevin, while his sprightly daughter, whom we have already designated as the madcap of the Cinque Ports, danced gaily round the new comer in joyful remembrance of many playful gambols with which he had indulged her in more juvenile years of innocent mirth.

“Hallo! my enterprising friend,” said Portevin, “what daring adventure brings you here? You may as well put your head

into the noose at once as enter this port. There are plenty of enemies who would soon make their money of you, for where does the mortal man breathe who has not enemies among those whom he deems his friends?"

"The very reason I have put my head into your nest," ventured Sandford. "Thinking, for old acquaintance sake, I would give you the first chance to claim the reward for my capture, which I understand De Vere has offered to double."

"Away with you, man," answered the seaman, "it shall never be said my father's son betrayed an old friend; and as for that diabolical shark, De Vere, I wish I had him on board the vessel now."

"We should be a goodly company, certainly," rejoined Sandford. "I should not care about quaffing a cup with him myself."

"Quaff a cup with him," growled Portevin; "no; unless mine contained a good measure of

old Rhenish, and his a like quantity of poison. I want him here for the satisfaction of pitching him overboard, with an iron weight tied to his neck."

"Vengeance will come upon him some day I doubt not," replied Sandford, "but I do not imagine he will come to a watery grave."

"Well, I don't know that," said Portevin. "It is said he was not born to be strangled. A soldier's death would be too honourable. I should not be surprised if he is drowned after all."

"Time will show," rejoined Sandford. "But we will leave these speculations for the present. I want to serve this De Vere a turn, and for that purpose have sought your assistance."

"You shall have it heart and soul," returned Portevin. "Say what can I do to serve you; I will work day and night."

"Just what I want," said Sandford; "yet

how is it, you used to be rather partial to these usurping Lords?"

"A curse upon them," ejaculated Portevin, "they have deprived me of a rich booty."

"At one time," answered Sandford, "I imagine they winked at those little acts of—I won't say piracy—now, when in full power, I presume they want most of the plunder for themselves—is it so?"

"You are rather too plain, my old friend, though about right," replied Portevin; "never mind what they have done; let us consider how to serve them out."

"The Prince has escaped, you know, possibly," said Sandford, "I assisted in the enterprise."

"I heard he has given them the double," rejoined Portevin, "but did not know you had to do with it. You seem to be captain of every ship, upon my word."

"Well, I try to do my best," replied Sand-

ford, "but let us proceed; the Castle of Pevensel is, you are aware, besieged by De Montfort and Rochfort de Vere."

"Yes," said Portevin, "and what follows?"

"Why, just this," continued Sandford, "the Prince presses Leicester so hard, that these forces will very likely be called away in fourteen days. Yet the besieged may be on the verge of starvation; provisions must be got into the Castle first of all."

"I don't exactly see how that's to be managed," answered Portevin. "Many a night have I whistled to raise a breeze, yet, I fear, my pipe would be exhausted before stirring a gale sufficient to blow those necessities into the Castle."

"It can be done, I think," said Sandford, "and you are the man to do it. You know where the marsh waters lie near the shore, I think the surge almost reaches them at high tide?"

"I know them well," answered Portevin.

“ There is water enough there to drown two men standing one top of the other.”

“ Very well,” replied Sandford; “ don’t you think that if the strip of land was defended by crossbows, the provisions might be got in that way during the night.”

“ Saints of heaven, they might !” exclaimed Portevin, “ if someone could get into the Castle and tell them we are coming.”

“ If someone could get into the Castle,” faintly repeated Sandford, musing deeply.

It is doubtful whether this problem would have received any solution, but for the re-entrance of little Kitty. That lively damsel had been entertaining some foreign musicians lately arrived in her father’s vessel. Exhausted with dancing to their cheerful airs, she returned to seek refreshment at the moment Sandford was echoing Portevin’s words. In her usual impulsive manner, she immediately exclaims—

"Some one get into the Castle? I will, if you like."

"You get into the Castle?" said Sandford. "What could you do, except look out for a sweetheart; not a bad chance for that, perhaps."

"Why so?" answered Kitty; "is the Castle a sort of store where they turn out those desirable articles ready made on the shortest notice?"

"I don't know about that," said Sandford. "You can try it if you please."

"Very well," said Kitty. "What does Rochfort de Vere want to besiege the Castle for? Plunder, I suppose."

"I rather expect he wants that pretty young lady," said her father; "and, if I am not mistaken, our adventurous friend is on the look out also."

"Oh!" said Kitty, "then having found a sweetheart there to his satisfaction, he recommends me to look out in the same quarter."

“Come, we must not waste time,” said Portevin, “though it is very pretty amusement. Kitty, you go with these musicians. I think it very likely they will let you pass into the fortress.”

“We must not go so directly to work as that,” replied Sandford. “Proceed first into Rochfort’s camp and give them an entertainment; then propose going into the Castle, promising for a reward to bring them information of its inward condition.”

“That’s right,” rejoined Portevin. “Kitty, do you think you understand what’s got to be done.”

“Oh! yes,” exclaimed that sharp little mad-cap. “We are to go into Rochfort de Vere’s camp, give them a performance, propose going to the Castle to bring some information, get some money out of him beforehand; then, proceeding to the fortress, to tell them you are coming in

the night with provisions ; to make myself agreeable, and to look out for a lover."

" That will do very well," answered Portevin, " except you may leave out the last part of it, if you please."

" Oh ! that would be leaving out the best of it," returned Kitty.

" Well, then it is agreed," said Sandford. " Can we depend on these musicians ; have they the skill, and are they to be trusted ?"

" As for that," said Portevin, " they know but little English except a few songs learnt by rote, and almost as little French."

" And as regards their skill," joined in Kitty, " would you like to hear a short performance."

" Thanks, no," said Sandford. " I am hardly in a musical humour just now."

" You see he is thinking about the young lady," said Portevin.

" Well, it is better to confess the truth,"

answered Sandford. "I am not ashamed to acknowledge it."

"Neither need you be so," said Portevin. "I am a blunt fellow myself, and I like a man who speaks his mind."

"Now, my dear little maid," said Sandford, before you start on this expedition I will give you two packets to convey. Hand one to the officer commanding the crossbow men, the other to a young man named Conisburgh."

"Conisburgh!" said Kitty; "is he to be the sweetheart, then?"

"He will suit you very well, I think," said Sandford, "and you can tell him I say so, if you like."

"Very well; mind, I shall," returned Kitty.

"Now get you gone," said Portevin. "To prevent suspicion do not land near the Castle. Go into the harbour, and start into the country to Rochfort's camp."

While Portevin arranged preliminaries with the musicians Sandford wrote the necessary communications to Pevensel, which were duly concealed under Kitty's robe. Then, embarking on board the same vessel that conveyed Sandford to Hastings, the little madcap, accompanied by the minstrels, started on her mission. Her sprightly spirits were excited even beyond their usual limits, whether in the prospect of diversion from the coming scene, or in the probability of obtaining a sweetheart, we leave for future consideration. For some time Sandford and the weather-beaten parent watched the little craft; then retiring to consider the next proceeding in furtherance of their designs, they seated themselves before two friendly stoups of wine, a third containing some narcotic poison being unnecessary in Rochfort de Vere's absence.

"Shall we be able to get all on board in time?" said Sandford, while Portevin reckoned up a list

of the things he had to procure ; “ remember we have only six hours.”

“ Plenty of time for more too, if desirable,” replied the seaman ; “ we must mind nobody knows where we are going, except us two, and we shall have to repeat the dose in a night or two in need.”

“ I must leave it all to you,” answered Sandford. “ I dare not put my head out of the ship ; besides you have the experience, and understand better how to accomplish the work than I do.”

“ The great thing is to keep it secret,” returned Portevin, “ I must purchase these necessities off Rochfort de Vere’s agents for my own use.”

“ That distinguished Knight then will have the honour of supplying us,” said Sandford, smiling ; “ what do you think, had I better remain in the Castle or return with you ?”

“ Remain in the Castle,” answered Portevin ;

“should it be noised abroad you are here it is all over at once. Besides, you can take care of the young lady. Look well also to the defence; that young Knight De Meudon is not the man his father was; he may sing and amuse in a manner I am too rough a subject to comprehend, but I fear he will never steer them through this squall.”

“That is exactly my opinion,” said Sandford; yet I am unwilling to depreciate others if I can avoid it. Now I have been waiting to ask you another question, do you know anything of an old mad woman named Margot?”

“Right well,” said Portevin, “she is mad about the clouds and her money that is to be saved for the best youth in the land; she will have some difficulty to find him, I expect.”

“I never heard the latter part of the story,” replied Sandford; “how came you to know her? And is she really possessed of this money?”

“No doubt about it,” continued Portevin, “I believe it is hoarded up somewhere in France. I served as boy on board her departed husband’s vessel ; she intended this money for her son who was killed. Now she jabbars about the best youth in the land ; whether it is madness or not I am unable to say.”

“Do you think she has anyone in idea or not,” said Sandford.”

“I cannot tell in the least,” said Portevin, “whether there is any truth in it ; it is impossible to say. Nobody knows where the money is hidden, and should she die it may never be found. Now I must be going to make our preparations, so take another cup to our success, and make yourself comfortable till I return.”

Under less exciting circumstances Sandford would have made still more minute enquiries into the mysterious history of the woman who, tramping the country as a vagrant, seemed still to

be possessed of wealth. His immediate object was satisfied, he wished to ascertain whether she was to be relied upon were her services required in emergencies. He believed she was, and the subject soon passed from his mind, agitated by coming exploits. Should they succeed, he would again have to meet Emmeline after a long separation. To comfort and strengthen her under surrounding dangers, and perhaps under her uncle's wrath, which at all risks he felt himself bound to encounter by every sentiment of honour and affection. He could easily foresee the approach of another struggle; if success should attend the Prince's arms, he might expect a rise in honour and wealth to a degree that even Savoy himself might esteem rather than despise, but should another fatal blast, like the disastrous field of Lewes, sear the hope dearest to his heart, he must abandon all as lost, and persuade the fair lady to fly the country with her guardian for ever.

The agitation of these thoughts was enhanced by the idleness which necessary concealment enforced. He could not assist in the preparations. He dare not be seen. At length Portevin returned. All is ready. They sailed while the dancing waters sparkled in the level beams of a setting sun, the good ship proceeding in an opposite direction about two miles, to divert suspicion, before tacking towards the haven of Pevensel. How thoughtfully our young adventurer gazed on those grey towers. Is all in readiness? Has little Kitty got into the Castle? He gazes still on the spot adored with domestic fondness.

CHAPTER VI.

“Farewell, for on that word of pain,
Afflicted memory long will dwell;
Be good—be happy—once again,
God bless and prosper you. Farewell!”

SNOW.

WHILE Sandford and his nautical companion were discussing the plot for relieving the inmates of Pevensel, a panic occurred in the city of London. Not a fall of the Three per Cents., or the inability of some influential firm to meet its engagements. Yet, incomprehensible as it may appear to the busy world in the present day, there was a panic in the city.

Swiftly past the old Cathedral of St. Paul flies a messenger mounted on a spirited steed. His aspect was weary and dejected. Without rest, day or night, he ran a match against time, large rewards depending on the delivery of some dispatches at the Tower, to John FitzJohn, the murderer of the old Jew. The allotted moments would expire in one short hour. Even in this extremity of haste, he halted at a rude little church. One glance at a pretty buxom bride just leaving its narrow portal was irresistible; a winning smile answered his proffered salute. In the hurry he omitted to notice the bridegroom. Unconscious youth, you scarce deserve that welcome recognition. Haste away. Deliver your little pack, claim the promised guerdon, and mar the pleasure of that happy wedding day.

The unwelcome tidings soon spread about, the numbers that flocked to the Prince's standard, threatened to hem Leicester in on every side.

These despatches direct FitzJohn to proceed to Hereford, with every man he could raise, and they further command what is even more significant : a trustworthy retainer, whose name we withhold for the present, is to proceed on to Pevensel forthwith, with a scroll commanding the forces which surround the Castle to raise the siege, and to march at once to the scene of approaching strife.

Words of exaggeration pass from lip to lip, increasing the spreading panic ; groups of enquiring citizens emerge from their little rude shops, and congregate in the Cheapside to discuss their future prospects. Some venture to affirm that Leicester is already defeated, and a prisoner. What have they now to expect but the just retribution of the Prince's vengeance ? Remember the insults offered by the citizens of London to his royal mother. Others unwilling to venture a direct contradiction of these reports, express their

disbelief, while the Earl's more enthusiastic adherents meet the question with angry and positive denials.

The little breezes that arose during these discussions seemed scarcely to forecast the violence of the coming storm. The bells ring forth a call to arms, but the larger portion of the valiant citizens had already been drafted away. Still, with this limited muster, FitzJohn departed. The messenger who brought the dispatch remained for refreshment and repose, strictly enjoined to seek the retainer, who was deputed to carry the scroll to Pevensel without a moment's delay. Diligently he set to work, first making enquiries at the old inns near the Tower, but without effect. Then his operations are extended over a wider range with no better success. The task is almost abandoned in despair, when passing the little church where he halted that morning, curiosity prompted him to enter its sacred

walls, and to enquire from the attending officials, who was the little round-faced bride that greeted his entrance into the city.

Though no service was proceeding, the sacred edifice was almost crowded with private worshippers—all women—who bent the knee in humble supplication on behalf of some absent brother, or lover, as the case might be, while husbands and fathers discussed the probable aspect of affairs in the neighbouring streets, their words increasing louder with anger as the hours pass along. At length an official approached the door, and the weary messenger was duly informed that the rosy damsel was the daughter of our almost forgotten friend John Bluff, of the Crown Inn, who that morning was united in the holy bonds of matrimony to Robert Morton.

“Robert Morton,” thought the enquirer, “married this morning! Then I shall find him

at the Crown Inn. Almost the only one I have not yet visited."

That bewitching smile still seemed to haunt him, he willingly would have foregone his reward to be spared the unpleasant task. But it was too late. He must proceed to the Crown Inn, break up the joyful festivities, and deprive the happy bride of her newly-acquired lord.

He had scarcely turned into the old Crown yard, a place rather considerable in dimensions, before the sound of lively mirth broke upon his ear. A numerous company surrounded the Inn, unable to gain admittance to the crowded interior. At the old wooden door stood the well-known figure of John Bluff, who had left the bridal table to distribute the good liquor with his own hand to several old acquaintances. Notwithstanding the importance of the occasion, he seemed hardly to display the conviviality customary to his nature on less important occasions.

In this age of difficult communication, when those stirring words—farewell—be happy—God bless you—were once pronounced, the parting was generally very protracted, if it was not an adieu until the brighter days of eternity. With all his rough manners, and habitual indulgence in creature comforts, Bluff doted on that only child, whose mother perished in giving her birth. He had watched the little tottering footsteps of her infancy. He had seen her grow to womanhood, in voice and stature so resembling the departed parent, that he regarded her as a living image of his deceased love, bringing back to remembrance the joyful hours of his young and happy days. It might be the last entertainment he should give the beloved girl in the house of her childhood. He was determined to spare nothing. All who presented themselves should share in its enjoyment, he himself abstaining from excesses with praiseworthy resolution, con-

sidering his usual propensities. So anxious was this loving father that nothing should spoil the pleasure of that memorable day.

The brightest jewel is often concealed under the roughest exterior until shaped by the lapidary's art. So nature frequently endows the human frame with an honest and sympathising heart, hidden under a rude surface of uncultivated manners. We could readily excuse our friend Bluff's rough character, but for his intemperate habits, yet, in our daily walks through life, how many mortals we meet who, though haunted with some besetting sin, are, when apart from its influence, the most honest in mind, or the most useful in their sphere of action. This is a little digression in which we have indulged while the messenger threads his way through the noisy crowd, and confronts the worthy host.

"You are right welcome," said the portly landlord; "though a stranger you shall drink deep

before you quit the old Crown to-day. A day it will never witness again."

"Possibly not quite so welcome as you express!" shouted the messenger, his voice scarcely audible through the merry din. "I want a word with you alone; so you must manage it, or desire Morton to attend me at once."

"Out with you man," said Bluff, "this is not a day to answer questions. Bide here till the morning. Come, take this cup, and many another shall you quaff before the night is passed."

"Thank you, I have not the leisure," said the messenger. "Life or death depends on the discharge of my duties, and I must see Morton at once."

"You, a stranger, refuse the draught that no living citizen would decline?" answered Bluff. "Remember this is my child's wedding day. I

say, away—for no such churl shall put his foot in the old Crown.”

It is probable that a serious altercation would have ensued, had not the sound of many voices announced that Bluff's services were required at the bridal feast. The throng that occupied the narrow passages were compelled to condense into the smallest possible space, every man holding his breath for that purpose, while the jolly host passed by. This accomplished, the ranks reclosed like an air ball reinflating itself after undergoing a violent squeeze. The messenger attempted to follow, but the restless crowd seemed disinclined to suffer a similar compression for his accommodation, and for some time the repast proceeded without further interruption.

The honest messenger was rather inclined to abandon his enterprise, but it involved a question of profit and loss. Large rewards depended on its prompt execution, which he was unwilling to

forego. With hasty strides he quitted the yard, and found his way through some narrow alley to the back of the Inn. Here he entered, unobserved in the confusion, and, ascending a back staircase, his course was again blockaded on reaching a landing at the end of a passage leading to the guest chamber, though he could distinctly hear the joyful sounds that broke from the festive board.

“ My worthy friends,” said Bluff, “ pardon my seeming neglect, the flasks are now replenished, let us once more honour this joyful hour.”

“ God bless her,” shouted a chorus of voices; “ there is not a man in London City that would refuse compliance.”

“ My friends there is one,” said Bluff.

“ Name him—name him.”

“ Hear me,” said the stranger, who had now contrived to find his way into the room, “ I should not have declined—”

The assembly perceiving at once who was the culprit, rose as one man. The unhappy messenger was rudely seized, and would unceremoniously have been pitched out of the lattice on to the ground some thirty feet below, had not the entreaties of the bride caused his tormentors to relent. He did not, however, escape, without a few sharp kicks, before the voice of old Bluff, roaring like the enraged lion, put a temporary check to these violent proceedings.

“Hold now, ye zealous citizens,” said the worthy man, “and let him recant at the shrine of Bacchus. Here are two cups which he shall drink to the dregs, before we hear a syllable of excuse, one to atone for the past, and another to satisfy the present.”

Though the quantity of fluid contained in these two vessels far exceeded his usual limits, still he complied from the pressure of necessity rather than choice; bowing with some attempt

at grace, first to the bride, then to the bridegroom. This ceremony concluded, the company settled down in their accustomed places, and the stranger, enlivened by these copious draughts, was informed by Bluff that he might offer an explanation of his former conduct if he wished, then the sooner he departed the better.

“My worthy friends,” said the messenger, “your good host has entirely mistaken my motives. There is no one present who more sincerely wishes the bride all future happiness; but I have an unpleasant duty, which, trust me, I would rather have been spared. I come with my Lord of Leicester’s commands, that Morton should instantly quit this roof, and proceed to Pevensel in Sussex with these scrolls.”

“A curse upon the scrolls,” said Bluff. “No Morton leaves this roof to-night. I will lock him in first with my own hand.”

“Peace, my energetic friend,” said the mes-

senger, "let the young man speak for himself."

"My friends," said Morton, "this is the proudest day of my life. Its pleasure shall not be marred for fifty earls, or ten times that number of scrolls. Sooner than quit this good house to-night I will throw off my allegiance, and declare for the Prince's service."

"Beware how you speak," said the messenger, "or I will deal with you at once as a traitor."

"Is this base infringement of a citizen's right to be tolerated?" vociferated Bluff, the livid hue of his cheeks giving way to a ghastly pallor, from the excess of rising passion, while his daughter hung round his neck, endeavouring to calm the violence of his wrath. The portly sire placed his arm gently round her shoulder, and hugged her, while tears of womanly fear fell on his massive chest. The spectators were silent,

until the stranger, looking sternly at Bluff, quickly replied—

“I have no alternative, it is my lord’s positive commands.”

Old Bluff clung to his beloved child with still fonder embrace, and seizing a cup, bawled out in tones which resounded across the adjacent yard—

“Then, confusion to the usurping Earl, here’s a bumper to the Prince’s health.”

An indescribable scene of strife resulted from this declaration. Several of the guests immediately followed old Bluff’s example ; others, gifted with more political stability, or influenced by private motives, remained steadfast to their cause. Words did not long satisfy the violence of party feelings, blows soon followed, and the messenger, for the safety of his scrolls, deemed it prudent to escape during the confusion, while the bride was borne away by her loving husband in a state

of unconscious swoon. The battle did not end here, it was soon noised abroad that the respected citizen Bluff had openly declared his adherence to the Prince. A general and indiscriminate *mêlée* followed, spreading through the length of Cheapside. The Mayor read his proclamations without effect ; every man at arms had been withdrawn from the city, he was without means to enforce any order.

On the following morning Morton departed with his bride. " Farewell," said old Bluff. Ah ! how that word lingers on the ear. Was it for years or for ever ? It was until eternity ! Soon after this occurrence the old landlord expired suddenly in the height of intemperate indulgence, while Morton engaged in the Prince's service, though in what capacity the future will elucidate. Years passed away ; the temper of the times had undergone a marked change. Age stamped its furrows on the cheeks of that bloom-

ing bride, before she again visited the ancient city of her birth.

The weary messenger reposed for a couple of days, and then conveyed the scroll to Pevensel himself, which, despite this awkward delay, reached its destination a little sooner than Sandford had ventured to anticipate, as the course of events will show.

CHAPTER VII.

“All constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil.”

COWPER.

“Good mother,” said a listless youth, who, weary with idleness, wandered in the shady woods to beguile the dull hours of life, “Good mother, seek better shelter for your evening rest, for these lowering clouds speak of coming rain.”

“I fear it not,” answered our old friend Margot, reclining on a mossy slope. “These are but

passing shadows that the light breezes will soon disperse. Look steadily on their hard and varied forms, and neglect not to profit by your experience."

"My comprehension may be very limited," replied the youth; "but if they do not foretell the approach of evening showers, their meaning is lost upon me."

"Ah! young man, the evil deeds that yonder castle has too often witnessed will soon have their end. Soon will you have a new master, and may he prove better than the present."

"I have only grown a year older since entering the service," said the youth. "In that time my lord has visited us but twice. It is dull enough to be a convent. Sick with constant nightly revels, the retainers have sunk into a state of apathy, a good master might raise us to something better."

"Oh! young man," returned Margot, "those

walls are too limited for your master's wicked deeds ; but a day of retribution is at hand."

" Well, good mother, time will show how far your words are true ; mine are already fulfilled, for the shower is beginning in earnest. I spend this livelong night on that lofty watch-tower. If the shelter of my little cell will be acceptable, you have only to follow me."

The rapid manner in which the old woman arose seemed to imply that she had accomplished some contemplated object ; nor was it less apparent to a casual observer, from the youth's musing attitude, that he had wandered forth for the purpose of solitary deliberation. Silently occupied with their respective thoughts, and drenched by the pouring rain, these two strangely contrasted figures strolled down the long vista of fir trees that led to the Castle of Hurstingham.

During Rochfort de Vere's protracted absence,

the men at arms left within those walls had been subject to every petty oppression by the subordinate officers, to whom the care of the stronghold had been confided. No relaxation beguiled their dreary hours, except the scene of indulgence so encouraged by their dissolute master—a transient pleasure, if indeed it may be termed one, from which the mind soon turns away with sickened loath, its very excess often proving its surest remedy.

Such sentiments had been gradually growing upon the inmates of Hurstingham for some months before Margot obtained access to the castle. Several had utterly forsaken those mighty revels regarded with disgust, while others frequented them only on particular occasions. Many had a longing to engage in some other service, waiting an opportunity which the peculiar times rendered most difficult and rare. A number of would-be deserters were assembled in a minor

hall, when the young man entered with his strange companion, whose conversation soon proved attractive, both from its extravagant curiosity, and for the fact of its opening some loophole to carry out an idea already premeditated.

“Here is an old soothsayer,” said the youth, in introducing his new acquaintance, “who would have me believe that these overhanging clouds foretell a change of masters, but not a coming shower. Had her words proved correct I should have been spared this drenched skin at all events.”

“Come in, old scarecrow,” exclaimed a man who, indulging in a listless doze, was sprawling on a wooden table. “I care not if your predictions are as faithful, as your weather-wise conjectures are false.”

“In truth,” said the old woman, “my words spoke neither yea or nay concerning these refresh-

ing drops. They will pass away before our garments are dried. Hear now what say the signs of the heavens. As we passed the drawbridge, the dull clouds parted, admitting a ray of sunlight, which tipped the towering keep. Oh! cruel master, your form will never again darken these massive walls."

"Tell us now, old mother, whence do ye come?" replied the spokesman, while the assembled men gathered round.

"I followed the flying vapours that crossed the blue sky before the western breeze," answered Margot; "these changing winds prompt me to return to the place from whence I came."

"God help your wandering brains," said the youth who conducted Margot to the Castle, "that only tells us how you got here; not where you came from."

"I came, young man, from beyond Wigmore," returned Margot. "There countless thousands

flock to the Prince's standard, numerous as the stars which shine in clear nightly skies."

"Why, then, good mother, has the Prince escaped?" was a general enquiry.

"Aye, and marches with his noble bands to hem Leicester in on every side," rejoined Margot, "and if ever passing shadows spoke words of truth, he will be the destruction of your ungodly master."

"Hear ye this, my friends," said the spokesman. "Will ye rest content to bear that constraint of which your souls grow weary. Here is a royal master in whose service we may engage."

"Lead on, lead on," cried a hundred voices, their hands drawing as many daggers. "Let the vile subordinates who have been set over us pay the penalty of their crimes."

"Nay, my friends," said the spokesman, "let them wallow in the mire of intoxication while we

quit the Castle. Good mother, knowest thou the way to Wigmore?"

"Every bush that stops the road can I show," returned Margot. "Every tree that spreads a welcome shade; the pool that will afford a cooling drink can I find; and every cloud that crosses the sky will guide us in our course."

"Listen again, my friends," said the leader; "are you all willing to abide the enterprise?"

"All, all," echoed through the low and massive roof.

"Then let each man collect provision for the way—all his strength will carry," continued the leader. "At the midnight watch we depart hence; prepare the horses, and let those drunken oppressors finish their revels in peace."

"We will be ready," exclaimed the voices, each man rushing from the chamber to do his share in the preparations, while the leader still held Margot in conversation.

“ Good mother, your weary limbs need repose ; yet we cannot leave you behind ; a horse litter shall convey you on the way.”

“ Thanks, good friend,” answered Margot. “ I have tramped from Pevensel to Hereford, to Wigmore, then to this Castle. My strength is failing, for over sixty summers have worn upon me, each contributing its share of woe.”

“ You came from Pevensel,” said the leader. “ That’s the Castle my master helps to besiege. Know you anything of my old comrade, Arthur Conisburgh ?”

“ Yea, Heaven bless him ! he saved my life,” replied Margot ; “ his reward is yet to come. He is the best youth in the land.”

“ Is he still in the service of the Lord of Savoy ?” enquired the leader.

“ For the present,” returned Margot. “ Yet the time cometh when he shall become his own master. The vile Lord, who shall see this Castle

no more, vows vengeance upon him. But when the signs are fulfilled, and that fiend shall perish from the earth, then shall the good youth dwell in safety enriched with ample possessions."

"Really for my understanding you deal too largely in incomprehensible mysteries," said the leader. "From where is he to derive this wealth? and how will his old master's death bring these mighty things to pass?"

"When last we stood together on the walls of Pevensel," rejoined Margot, "a dark cloud like a horse-shoe stood over his head; the wind which drove this blackened mass from the western horizon suddenly became hushed to a deadly calm, the cloud remaining tranquil until the youth left the lofty turret."

"So that's all," said the leader of the mutiny; "then I should say his chance is rather indefinite."

“It will assuredly come true,” said Margot. “If before your master’s death Conisburgh becomes possessed of wealth, not one jot of which is derived from the Lord of this Castle, will you then believe in the celestial signs?”

“Well, I might under those circumstances,” said the leader, smiling; “but I must waste no more time in listening to these conjectures. Get you ready to start with the first that cross the drawbridge.”

The shades of night had closed, when the officers in charge of the fortress were so stupefied with drink that the various little bands left the Castle unobserved. Impressed by the evils that recent constraint had imposed upon them, all had left those walls before midnight, except some ten or twelve revellers who now formed the whole of Rochfort de Vere’s staff, save a small band of fifty to sixty warriors who accompanied him to Pevensel. These now claim our atten-

tion, while the mutinous deserters pursue their journey. If not so truly delineated in the skies as Margot would have us believe, still there are shadows of coming events.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ No salutation kind on either part
Was left unsaid. He then enquired, ‘ How long
Since thou arrivedst at the mountain’s foot
Over the distant waves ? ’ ”

CARY’S *Dante*.

THE power of music’s charm had so enlivened the adventurers in a little bark that the day was waning considerably before Kitty’s sprightliness grew weary with deferred anticipations. The vessel still struggled against adverse winds. That refreshing though unwelcome breeze so seriously impeded the contemplated proceedings

that, prompted by the necessity of expedition, the little band disembarked at a convenient gap about two miles eastward of Pevensel, and journeyed on foot to Rochfort de Vere's camp. No serious impediment checked their progress beyond a few smart repartees between Kitty and the men on guard.

The appearance of De Vere's tent would seem to imply that he contemplated a protracted struggle before the Castle of Pevensel surrendered. Everything was most solid and permanent in character. Here some weeks had already been passed in suspense, the stronghold still holding out, a state of endurance the besiegers daily flattered themselves must be near its end. The eager Baron was seated at a large table loaded to profusion with good cheer, and surrounded by the principal officers attached to the forces under his command. Discussion had followed discussion concerning the probability

of success. A usual round of daily pastimes had been duly enacted; the minds of all were growing weary; the condition of the besieged was a subject of earnest conjectures, when a retainer announced that some musicians just arrived from abroad would be glad to give the company an exhibition of their skill. The proposal met with rapturous and universal approval.

In accordance with this gracious permission the musicians entered, first bowing with due reverence to the stately Lord, who answered their salute with becoming condescension. Then little Kitty followed, bending her supple form in a profound courtesy, and, inspired by a lively tune which the minstrels poured forth from their trilling harps, she executed a sportive dance, winning many expressions of delight. This concluded, the little maid assumed the office of collector, receiving numerous voluntary contribu-

tions, while her companions chanted the following words to an impressive strain :—

“ List, warriors, while a song we sing,
To cheer thy hearts our notes shall ring ;
What praises faint our music showers,
Soft zephyrs waft through sylvan bowers.
Lightly our chant in moonlight gleam
Shall beauty wake from night’s sweet dream ;
Our tender notes sweet flowing rills
Will echo find o’er distant hills.

“ Our fathers’ deeds shall be our song—
We seek their glory to prolong ;
With sparkling chords come now rejoice,
Or flinty stones will soon find voice.
Ever shall minstrels chant in rhymes,
And speak their names through future times ;
So music’s charm your soul inspires,
While loud we praise all valiant sires.”

When this and several other performances were concluded, Rochfort de Vere felt some curiosity to know all particulars concerning the history and destination of the itinerants. Before they entered, the haughty Baron had been petulant and snappish, vexed with the delay that the obstinate siege occasioned. Now the power of harmony maintained its reputation for softening the brutal passions. He looked upon Kitty with

a complacent smile amounting almost to admiration. What a potent enchanter is a kind look ;— a few such smiles might have prevented the disaffection at Hurstingham. Long had his followers watched for it in vain, to behold a face on which disappointed projects of license and rapacity had stamped a sullen mark. It seemed to all the company as something mysterious and unreal, when, in a patronizing tone of voice to which they were quite unaccustomed, Rochfort exclaimed—

“Come here, my dear little maid ; I want to ask you a few questions.”

“Now tell me,” said Rochfort, patting Kitty’s head in a persuasive manner, “how long have you been on these shores, and from whence did these good men come across the waves ?”

“They came last from the Court of the King of France,” replied Kitty, and while in this country place themselves under my guidance. Hearing

that my Lord was out of temper, I thought a little diversion might produce a beneficial effect. I rejoice to find my anticipations realised."

"Bless your impudent little face," returned Rochfort; "a very good guide, one who will take especial care of the gains. To where are you bending your steps?"

"We await your commands," answered Kitty. "Our exertions have already produced a good effect; we may, perhaps, render a deeper service."

"These entertainments pass the weary hours away, certainly," said Rochfort. "I trust your services may not long be required, for surely the Castle must soon yield."

"Then, my Lord should not selfishly engross all the pleasure," returned Kitty. "Let the unfortunate sufferers have the benefit of one performance, if so inclined, and my Lord would soon learn something concerning the probability of surrender."

“ Well said, my little maid,” continued Rochfort. “ Gain admittance to the Castle if possible, keep those wicked little eyes and ears open, and return before midnight.”

“ I will do my best,” said Kitty. “ Possibly I may meet with some disaffected soul, who for a small bribe would return with us dressed as one of these minstrels.”

“ Good again,” replied Rochfort. “ Not that it may altogether be so easily accomplished ; yet if you find them discontented, we may assume the food is short. Disaffection soon follows on an empty stomach. Seek out the most petulant, and see if an offer of twenty crowns will induce him to follow you.”

“ Promises go for very little,” rejoined Kitty ; “ it is upon the sight of treasure that temptation soon follows. If your knightly favour will trust me with the crowns, I shall have more certainty in dealing with some hungry waverer.”

“ You are an active little coadjutor,” answered Rochfort. “ Here are the crowns. Show them only until you have him outside the Castle ; however, I think your young wits are sharp enough.”

“ Too much so, I consider,” said an officer, rising hastily from his seat. “ Mark me, that bewitching little maid comes here prompted by some wiser head ; we shall be overreached in this matter.”

“ Let me manage my own concerns,” said Rochfort, looking at the officer with scornful reproach, though not unimpressed by his words ; then turning to Kitty, he continued, “ You will leave two of this band behind as hostages until you return.”

“ Nay, we must think of a better expedient,” replied Kitty, with wonderful aptness under the emergency. “ My Lord must honour me with his confidence, or the scheme is abandoned ; these men would never be content to separate—it would

mar the effect of their performance. If my Lord is willing, I would offer a far better suggestion."

"Say on, my little maid!" exclaimed Rochfort, "though beware of trifling with me."

"My Lord's temper seems to require a little more music," answered Kitty. "It would be more generous of your Knightly honour to double the reward should I succeed. Let that unbelieving swain take these crowns, and twenty more. We have plenty of dresses; disguised as one of the band he could accompany us, make his own observations, and distribute the money when we leave the Castle."

"He shall do so or forfeit his life," said Rochfort. "What says the busy chatterer? Is he unwilling?"

"I suppose I must put my head into the venture," said the officer, "though, to be candid, I should prefer supping in this tent."

"Then you had better have observed silence,"

retorted Rochfort. "Now get you gone; and while preparing let these men have a cup of wine each. My little maid, here's to your health."

Preparing to continue the evening's carouse, Rochfort only watched the retiring adventurers for a short distance. Not a word was spoken. The young officer had yet his misgivings, though he dare not encounter his master's increasing wrath. Slowly he walked to captivity, Kitty seizing many opportunities to execute a few derisive antics behind his back. The Castle reached, his suspicions were further aroused by the readiness with which Kitty gained admittance, and by the friendly recognitions that greeted her arrival. He endeavoured stoutly to persuade himself otherwise. It was too late to retreat. There he sits with the musicians in a small ante-room, while Kitty, rushing to the great hall, relates all her adventures, surrounded by De Meudon, Conisburgh, and everyone that

could crowd into the chamber. Cheer broke forth upon cheer when Kitty announced the coming measures for relief. How all those stout hearts leap for joy. How changed those manly countenances, except the slumbering and unconscious Lord. Again those exulting sounds filled the captive's mind with terror. His suspense was soon ended. He is pointed out by Kitty. Several men at arms rush upon him, denude his pockets of the crowns, and consign him to a dungeon in the lower vaults of the Castle. But, for the present, we leave the contemplation of the scene that immediately followed to return to De Vere's camp.

Scarcely had Kitty's band entered the Castle, before two officers rushed into Rochfort's tent, interrupting the banquet with a want of ceremony that raised the ire of the presiding Lord. Breathless with haste they stood panting like hunted fawns, excessive eagerness choking their

utterance. It is in vain to attempt a description of the sensation this scene produced. It was evident to all that something important had occurred. The pause was still unbroken, when De Mountfort, the younger, strode majestically into the tent, attended by numerous retainers. Rumours that spies surrounded the Camp were already rife. Suspicions of treachery were whispered. Even a revolt was by no means unexpected.

“I desire none of these intrusions,” said Rochfort, scowling at the breathless men. “Go and be satisfied with the company of your fellows.”

“I crave my Lord’s pardon,” answered one of the men, at last finding voice. “Was it truly by your orders these musicians passed into the Castle?”

“That is my own concern,” retorted Rochfort; “what follows if you reckon true?”

"Then we are betrayed; our comrade is a prisoner," returned the man, "and my Lord is hoodwinked by an artful maid. They are spies sent to the Castle with some friendly information."

"Death to you, you vile cur," exclaimed Rochfort, "thou hast acted the fool by letting them pass, and then coming here to prate. What can you know of this business?"

"I suffered them to pass, having confidence in my Lord's discernment," replied the man. "With my own eyes have I seen them received into the Castle as welcome friends, perchance not unanticipated."

"Is it possible? You are dreaming," said Rochfort; "the besieged might admit them, ignorant of their intentions, in hope to gain some information."

"I cannot persuade myself to believe it," retorted the man. "My Lord is the victim of

some imposition. Hear this man's story, and learn how your enemies watch round the camp."

The retainer that accompanied the former spokesman stepped forward, much embarrassed by the looks of the gazing assembly. His voice faltered, partly from disappointment at lost rewards, though mainly by fear, it being deemed almost criminal to let a prisoner escape. Such was Rochfort's arbitrary nature. It was fortunate for the unhappy youth that a powerful friend was present, or he would never have escaped the punishment to which the following confession exposed him :—

"My noble Lord," said the retainer, "I must trust to your generosity in misfortune. This morning I was returning from Lewes with five companions, when crossing the hills we espied a youth watching the movements of your soldiers. I knew him well. It was the same I once con-

ducted to Dover Castle, for whose capture your lordly munificence offers large rewards.”

“And letting him elude your vigilance, still hope to escape the death you merit?” interrupted Rochfort, turning white with passion.

“My Lord is not so hard hearted, I trust. Bear with me while I relate the sequence. We pursued him as swiftly as our chargers could follow. His light palfrey was too nimble for our encumbered steeds; yet we had almost reached him, when coming upon that fearful precipice which terminates the southern hills, he turned sharply round and rode down the slope towards Seaford. Two of our band fell into the sea, the rest were unable to follow up the pursuit, their horses being breathless with exertion.”

“It is a juggling trick you are playing,” retorted Rochfort. “That vile youth, who crosses my way at every turn, has bribed you to invent that plausible story—seize him, guards, at once.”

“Stay,” exclaimed De Mountfort, “why should he receive punishment if it should prove he has done his best, when a fool goes scathless who suffered himself to be blinded by a cunning little wench?”

“Pshaw! I say. Spare your base personalities,” said Rochfort. “Let him be searched at once, perchance we shall find the proceeds of his treachery.”

Preconceived suspicions will often lead to hasty and unfounded conclusions. This haze had clouded De Vere’s mind. No sooner was a considerable amount of treasure found on the unhappy officer, than a smile of sarcastic triumph passed over the Knight’s face. Guilt is beyond doubt. How could that stripling become possessed of such wealth except by Sandford’s bribes. It seemed sound doctrine, save to those who had engaged in robbing a cavalcade passing from Lewes to Hastings that morning. Thus ill-gotten

plunder may prove a curse, even in times when highway robbery was deemed a trade rather than a crime.

“Away with the hound,” exclaimed Rochfort ; “prepare a halter for his neck. See, my friends, here is the price of his conscience.”

“Wait a moment,” said De Mountfort, “keep an eye upon him until this matter is further investigated, and let all understand that no one shall pass towards the Castle without my special sanction.”

“Demons of hell,” answered Rochfort. “Am I to be bearded thus before my followers? Your father has once already dared to trifle with me ; let his son beware how he attempts to imitate his arrogance.”

“Silence, you bragging Knight,” replied De Mountfort ; “is it probable my father would have conferred these possessions on you, had he imagined you could only bring fifty to sixty

warriors into the field ? I question if I am not already wasting time before these strong walls ; one word more, and you shall take the venture upon yourself."

"Peace ; you forget my reserve at Hurstingham," said Rochfort, in a mild tone, knowing it would, perhaps, defeat his own object to prolong the quarrel.

"A disaffected and restless lot, unworthy of any confidence," answered De Mountfort. "I am told their officers have no control, and a little would entice them to desert altogether."

"Some lying villain has poisoned your mind," replied Rochfort ; "wait till this castle surrenders, and I will soon bring them into the field."

"We may, perhaps, wait long enough for that," returned De Mountfort ; "there is a deep scheme laid for us, or your musical friends would have returned long since."

“I will wager we see them yet,” said Rochfort. “Let them digest their supper; of a certainty there must be something to eat, else we should have seen the vagrants long since.”

“I am by no means so sanguine,” replied De Mountfort. “Here some of you go and look towards the Castle; have my horse saddled by daybreak; every inch of ground must be reconnoitered; these are times of war, and not fit moments for listening to musical jugglery.”

Though Rochfort de Vere felt himself considerably in his rival's power, a sense of inward pride might have urged matters to a serious altercation. It is mid-night. No little maid has returned with her bribed informer. The hoarse-winding trumpet echoes through the camp. The two leaders exchange mutual glances of alarm, while several retainers rush into the tent, exclaiming, “To arms! To arms! They are receiving provisions into the Castle from the sea.” De

Mountfort started up, and eyeing De Vere, scornfully ejaculated—

“Thanks, worthy Knight, for your good judgment. That enemy of yours has overreached us by sending a little girl to blind you with childish blandishments.”

“I must now acknowledge it true,” said Rochfort. “Yet had your father not released that reptile, in spite of my expressed wish, his arts would not have been practised on us.”

“The one was an act of mercy and consideration, the other of folly and shortsightedness,” retorted De Mountfort, drily.

“Be that as it may,” answered Rochfort, “this is not a time to bandy recriminations. Leave that to a fitting season. Do you hasten and see that our outposts are secure, and I will lead an overwhelming force to stop these little proceedings.”

“It is agreed,” answered De Mountfort. “Let

us haste away. De Vere, you are right. My father should never have released that stripling; he was the main promoter of the Prince's escape, and must be hunted to bay, or he may prove our destruction."

Some interval occurred before Rochfort could muster his men. The work of landing the provisions had considerably progressed, and he had not even started to repair the mischief his oversight had occasioned. Deceived as to the depth of the outlying waters that prevented any free access between the castle and the sea, many were lost in attempting to wade through this obstacle. At last the narrow neck of land was discovered. The first that rushed with warlike cries along that little isthmus, fell before the showering arrows that assailed them in front, and on both flanks. The second party met a similar fate. Goaded to madness, De Vere darted forward with his best armed retainers. The arrows

glinted off his Spanish armour without producing the least effect. Harmless and unscathed, he urged his soldiers forward, until a massive stone, skilfully hurled by a powerful slinger, fell heavy on his brow, and stretched him full length on the ground. His followers dragged his form away, and bore him back to the tent prostrate and insensible. Then, appalled by the fate of their chief, whose condition became a subject of exaggerated rumour, the attacking force contented themselves with looking on, while the besieged completed their operations. In silent amazement there stood the warlike host, their mighty strength baffled by the intelligence of a single brain.

CHAPTER IX.

“There is a fair behaviour in thee, Captain,
And though that nature with a beauteous wall
Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
With this thy fair and outward character.”

SHAKSPEARE.

THAT heaviness, which had endured through the long dreary night of despair, was turned into morning joy as the gallant bark and its daring occupants approached the Castle of Pevensel. Perhaps there is no greater blessing bestowed on man than the readiness with which long protracted cares are forgotten when the load is removed. Gaily flashing in the silver moonbeams,

a signal waves from the lofty battlements, where little Kitty's form is already discernible. Then rushing from the postern come the men-at-arms and archers who defend the neck of land, while the welcome provisions are landed across a plank from the wave-tossed ship.

Regardless of any hidden danger that might arise from Savoy's irascibility, Sandford darted from the ship, fearless and undaunted. On his way to the Castle he encountered Conisburgh with a scrutinizing look, a look that spoke volumes of immeasurable anxiety, not lost upon that faithful servant—

“My lady is well!” he exclaimed, “she has borne these troubles bravely, even speaking of her confidence in your zealous care. Now she watches over her sick uncle.”

“It is well,” returned Sandford, “let us see this business safely in progress, and I will speak a word with you again.”

All further probability of hostile resistance is at an end. The besiegers are driven back without the besieged sustaining a single loss, except one man, who venturing too far became a prisoner. All the stores were nearly landed before the leader of the enterprise once more entered that venerated Castle.

"Tell me," said Sandford, taking Conisburgh aside, "is the noble lord's illness dangerous?"

"I trust not," answered the servant, "though he is still unconscious. Better he should remain so until the ship is gone, or never believe my words again if he would not compel his niece to fly to France with that gallant young Knight."

"Why?" replied Sandford anxiously, "have they projected such an escape?"

"I overheard De Meudon propose it to my lord," said Conisburgh, "but the lady answered positively that at your bidding alone she would consent to quit the fortress."

“She is firm, then, in spite of her uncle’s anger,” answered Sandford; “speak briefly, and tell me all you know. How was the noble lord affected concerning the proposal?”

“Most favourably,” answered Conisburgh. “He withheld commands only because he deemed the scheme impracticable. You may trust me, was he aware of this opportunity, soon his fair niece would be placed for ever out of your reach.”

By these hurried words Sandford gleaned some little insight into De Meudon’s proceedings, though Conisburgh was not aware of the promises exchanged between Lady Emmeline and her guardian. The banished wanderer had to encounter the machinations of two rivals, one a man devoid of conscience, backed with the oppressive force and license afforded by the times, the other supported by that authority, which, in this age, great lords exercised over their female

wards. In the general confusion that prevailed at the moment he had little time for reflection. He well knew the strength of the lady's affection, and discarding all selfish motives, a fear impressed him that so frail a nature would sink under such conflicting influences. His energies were soon called into requisition, for Conisburgh had barely finished the vague recital of a disconnected story before they were joined by De Meudon, accompanied by Portevin and little Kitty.

"I have her uncle's authority," said De Meudon, firmly, speaking to Portevin. "Before this raging fever bewildered his brain he desired that the lady should accompany me to France. Escape was then impossible. Now the means are open. Prepare your vessel for her reception."

"It is useless to urge the matter further," said Kitty. "I have seen Lady Emmeline's maid. Her mistress refuses to quit the chamber. The

noble Lord is still unconscious—apparently sinking.”

“The greater need for some immediate action,” replied De Meudon. “Come, follow me to the sick man’s couch, and we will soon get the lady away.”

“Stay!” exclaimed Sandford. “This violation of all propriety and justice shall not proceed against the lady’s consent. A sense of duty would compel her to attend beside her guardian’s couch to the last. I have little cause to be his advocate when in anger he has made a futile attempt at my destruction.”

“In which act,” said De Meudon, getting much agitated, “you no doubt deem me a participator.”

“Not so,” answered Sandford. “Nature often hides a polluted mind under a garnished show of accomplishments. Yet of thee I believe otherwise, and deem you possessed of a soul that suits

with the outward character; still your present intentions are beyond reason, and dishonourable. I will stake my life there is not a man in this Castle who would see the fair lady dragged from her uncle's couch, for nothing but force would induce her to leave it."

"Your presumption is endless," returned De Meudon, working himself into a passion. "After vainly aspiring to the lady's hand and meeting the rebuff you might have anticipated, do you dare to assume the command within these walls? Those smuggled provisions will not last for ever, though no doubt you pride yourself on the adventure."

"They will last long enough, I believe," said Sandford. "If I am not mistaken our worthy friend will return to our relief in six days."

"Aye, to be sure," said Portevin, "and come better provided next time."

"That does not affect my proceedings," re-

turned De Meudon. "I have the noble lord's authority that his niece should be removed when it could be done with safety; nor will I be deterred by the menaces of inferiors."

"I much question whether you have any such authority," said Sandford; "and, if it be so, I shall assume sufficient to tell you flatly that at the present moment you cannot and shall not exercise it."

"By the faith of my fathers, am I to endure this insolence?" retorted De Meudon. "My temper is driven to distraction. I say, no more, or you shall be hurled from the battlements!"

"It is quite useless to make this display of excitement," replied Sandford, calmly. "The lady shall not be coerced. As for your foolish threats, find six men in this Castle who would raise a finger against me, and I will jump from the battlements of my own free accord."

- "Find two," exclaimed Conisburgh, triumphantly.

A serious rebuke would have followed this expression of sentiments. It was interrupted by a deafening cheer from the men who stood listening in the adjoining corridor. A cheer that might have carried conviction to a mind more prone to anger than De Meudon's. He paced the chamber briefly reflecting on the passing scene. He was defeated. It was impossible to proceed. Who could even tell what effect this newly arrived succour would have on Savoy's mind? Would that noble lord recover? His only hope—stay; no, he had another wild chance. Seek out De Vere. If that fiend should die by his hand the prize is gained.

These agitating thoughts restored the better aspect of his manly nature. The cheer rose with redoubled energy when the young Knight ex-

tended his hand to Sandford, who grasped it with readiness and fervour.

“Your forgiveness is, I am sure, as readily given as it is faithfully asked,” said De Meudon.

“I have determined on quitting this Castle to join some foreign levies just arrived at Hastings. At the end of six days I shall come back in the ship, and then hope the noble guardian himself will be able to express his sentiments concerning this dispute.”

“Be it so,” said Portevin; “but mark me. No fair lady shall be dragged on board my ship against her will. I will not suffer it for the best friend on earth. Haste now, the day is breaking, we must depart.”

“There is no time for further discussion,” said Sandford, “and in fact it is better avoided. You will take Conisburgh with you, for he can render great service, and this little madcap will take care of him I know.”

"To be sure I will," answered Kitty ; " mind I gave him your message."

" And what did he say?" asked Sandford.

" He said I was a little vixen, and gave me a kiss."

" He shall give you another," replied Sandford, " and then escort you to the ship. Now, farewell, the best of friends must part."

The lively Conisburgh suited the action to the word. The ship has received all its living cargo but one—one who looks anxiously back. Still hesitating, he slowly quits those towering walls. Was it only for six short days? Ah! look back again, and reflect on the uncertainty of worldly fate. It is a vain and empty shadow before, like all human conceptions, passing away for ever. There stands the gay youth gazing on those battlements, from which in a moment of passion he had threatened to pitch one of his despised rivals. It is hard to say from which rival he had

most to fear. Still he stands on the lofty poop. There is a haze that overspread the future of his earthly life, as the morning mists hide the departing ship.

There was a dead silence, succeeded by a murmur of expectation. All crowd round Sandford, the principal officers, the most menial domestic. He bids them be of good cheer. Doubtless the besieging foes will soon depart. How eagerly all seek to obey his directions for the Castle's safety, deeming it a distinction to be honoured with his commands, so greatly had Sandford won their confidence. All not required for some special duty are dismissed to rest, while the gallant youth, anxious to obtain the exact particulars of Savoy's condition, converses with Lady Emmeline's favourite domestic.

"Speak quickly of my Lord's state," said Sandford. "Is he still unconscious? Is there no hope?"

“I trust there is,” replied the maid. “He has not spoken, though once or twice opening his eyes, he clearly recognized my mistress, seeming to greet her with a slight smile.”

“That is so far assuring,” said Sandford. “How long since he has spoken?”

“It is several hours,” continued the maid. “He has not uttered a word since his niece exacted a promise from him, which I overheard.”

“Tell me what was the promise,” said Sandford, very eagerly.

“I scarcely think I ought to speak,” answered the maid; “but it will better prepare you to meet my mistress. I might incur her displeasure if she was aware I was so near at the moment.”

“You may confide in me,” said Sandford. “I will not betray you; pray tell me all.”

“My mistress expressed to her uncle a belief that you would yet bring us relief,” replied the

maid. "He chided her for such foolishness, and declared that if it should be so, he would only receive you as a friend, and forbad her to mention you again."

"I thank you," said Sandford. "Is it really all? Where is the promise, then?"

"There is more yet," continued the maid. "She answered tenderly, and promised compliance, if her uncle would not force her into an alliance with De Meudon."

"And he acceded to it?" said Sandford. "Pray go on."

"He did, with one reservation," said the maid. "If Rochfort de Vere should die by De Meudon's hand, his word is pledged to that young knight."

"That is a wild proceeding altogether," said Sandford. "De Meudon's light figure would be quite overmatched by De Vere's massive strength. But you have not spoken of this to anyone.

Promise me faithfully not to do so. How can I reward you?"

"Most truly I will not disclose it," said the maid. "There is only one reward I would accept. Should my beloved mistress ever become yours, permit me still to remain with her."

"If that event should ever come to pass," replied Sandford, "I should never desire a separation, so long as your lady wished you to stay."

"I thank you a thousand times," said the maid.

So attached was this servant to her beloved mistress. A thousand more thanks would have followed had not the little conference been interrupted. That devoted maiden has ventured to leave her uncle's couch, seeking the absent domestic. She heard her well-known voice speak a word of gratitude, though she knew not to whom, or for what. How little she imagined

that the adored youth was in the Castle, the fond deliverer whose name she had promised not to mention again. She knew him to be watching over her like a guardian spirit, inspired with heavenly support—but where? It was a shock overpowering to that tender soul. She fell into his extended arms, and drooped in a senseless swoon. It was his voice that revived the pale and prostrate form. Tenderly he kissed those fair cheeks, and pressed the agonized girl to his bosom—“Be hopeful”—“Be comforted.” He could speak deeper words of comfort, but she might not bear them at that trying moment. Return to the bed of sickness, and wait the coming of to-morrow to hear the balance of future destiny. She is there again beside her uncle’s couch, while, after engaging in active preparations to defend the sea approach in need, Sandford stands gazing thoughtfully from the ramparts. For a moment his mind wandered to

the Prince's movements, to Portevin and his companions. But there is one absorbing thought—a mysterious period of human existence—“to-morrow.”

CHAPTER X.

“ You call me still your life, oh, change the word,
Life is as transient as the inconstant sigh ;
Say rather that I am your soul, more just that name,
For like the soul, my love can never die.”

BYRON.

DURING the course of most mortal lives there are certain protracted durations of expectant hours. In these, seasons pass slowly on like years, weeks as months, and moments like days. Having completed his defences, Sandford still strolled on the battlements in anxious anticipation. His

impatient suspense seemed to realize the sentence of our immortal bard some three centuries before it was written—"to-morrow is a period nowhere to be found." He is thoughtful yet, looking from those lofty towers, though the midnight hour is gone. It is no longer on that never-attained period the morrow; on the present day two confiding hearts will meet in sympathizing affection, to speak their endless devotion, their fears, their sorrows, and their joys.

It was a pale, twilight ray, that broke upon a haggard face, worn by sickness and sorrowful care. The grey morning mist, that hid the departed ship, hung on the slumbering waves; their sound was hushed to the calmness of a whispering ripple, but the joyful sounds that echoed through the rugged walls had also died away. The massive towers stand in solemn quietude like a desert rock, save the measured tread of watchful sentinels. It was then an arm

slowly rose, as though seeking to embrace some beloved object; one the eye could dimly recognise. A voice spoke faintly. A voice believed to have been hushed for ever by one devoted maiden. She alone stood near to catch its murmurs—

“Emmeline, my dearest child, are we saved or lost?”

“We are saved.”

“By whom?”

“By one I dare not mention.”

How that aged form trembled with emotion. Those white lips quivered, vainly endeavouring to utter some further enquiry. A momentary flush illumed those pallid cheeks, passing away when exhausted nature relapsed into a light stupor, while the scarcely less agitated maid sank upon the floor, pouring forth a thankful offering to the throne of grace.

Lady Emmeline had looked upon that face

from earliest infancy. A few words need only escape. A gesture was almost sufficient to indicate Savoy's passing thoughts. That brief interval of prospective restoration awakened emotions of thankfulness, though with the uttered words came movements of the saddened features, in which the fair watcher read volumes of future grief. Pride still predominated. The prostrate lord might receive the fond youth as a distant friend, but with coldness and indifference. Perhaps not in anger, there would be a contending element of gratitude for deliverance, a sense of injustice. Had she done wrong in making that promise? Yet its terms offered the only prospect of future happiness. There was not a moment to be lost; she must see her deliverer now, while her guardian slumbered; hereafter she might not speak his name, and indeed might be enjoined not to acknowledge his services. Were they to part for ever? If he could not give her comfort,

he might afford some counsel, or would he deem himself wronged by her promise to banish his name from her lips? Once more she gazed upon that pale and hollow countenance. With anxious looks she softly left the chamber. Her steps are slow and trembling. The ever faithful domestic announced her approach. In an adjoining apartment Sandford waited with silent expectation; then entering, she laid her heated brow upon his stalwart shoulder. With eyes sparkling in a lambent flame, he held that slender form. Still clasped by those protecting arms, in the peaceful haven of his manly bosom, her spirit dwelt, her hope was in him. Though fate seemed to divide their ways on earth, yet a mystic link bound them as one in heaven.

“With calmness and resignation you have endured deeper trials than these which now surround,” said Sandford. “The noble lord is recovering, or you could not leave his side. Be

then more hopeful, and confide in one who has dared every obstacle for your sake."

"I do trust you most implicitly," said Emmeline. "The trials I am compelled to endure do not reduce me to this extreme misery. I have wronged you, and I am no more worthy of your thoughts. Oh! tax me not with ingratitude; such services I can never forget. It was to save myself from stern and overbearing commands that I acted thus unkindly. Speak a word of forgiveness, and half my sorrows end."

"I will spare you the necessity of telling me your fears, by surmising them beforehand," replied Sandford. "Having disclosed your affection to my noble lord, and incurred his resentment, he has compelled you to renounce my name. You promised, and have done well. I blame you not, remember you are still my life."

"You forgive me?" said Emmeline, looking earnestly in his face. "Oh! say not that I am

your life. Life is but a passing vapour. Say I am your soul, for like that ever-enduring spirit my affection will last to all eternity."

"Be it so, then," replied Sandford. "You are my soul; keep your promise faithfully. If our hopes never reach a joyful issue the fault will not rest with you. While your own inclinations are not coerced, try to show a due and submissive affection to your guardian. Do not vex his prejudices, and never despair."

"Oh! tell me," exclaimed Emmeline, "are you more hopeful that our wishes may some day be realised. When we last parted you spoke of it as impossible. Oh! keep me not in suspense. Say what has transpired to raise your expectations and my joys. I can scarcely believe you spoke those words."

"Our destiny is now in the balance," replied Sandford. "Another great struggle is impending. Heaven grant it a happy issue, and I may

be able to influence your uncle in my favour. If the fates have decreed another reverse to the Prince's arms, we are then parted for ever, both to end our days in separate foreign lands."

"It seems impossible," answered Emmeline. "Yet knowing the excellence of your judgment, my heart is half filled with joy. I will not deceive. My uncle is most unrelenting against you. A word would endanger all our wishes, even should this struggle be successful; though in my simplicity I know not what changes and chances are passing in the world."

"Then listen, and be guided by me," said Sandford. "The Prince has escaped. I took a prominent part in the adventure, and have his confidence. A blow will soon be struck on his behalf, which I hope may crush his usurping foes. In the boldness of confidence I have told him our wishes, and he regards the matter most favourably."

“Nay ; can it really be so?” exclaimed Emmeline, joyfully. “Then, in heaven’s name, let me inform my guardian when he is sufficiently recovered ; it may, indeed, work a change.”

“You are mistaken,” replied Sandford. “Before he is able to rise from his couch these forces which surround the Castle will be withdrawn. If a word could have been spoken when danger was impending it might have produced a startling effect. Now the clouds of present peril are overpassed. His old prejudice will predominate ; let it alone ; faithful to your engagement, claim the fulfilment of his, and trust to time for the consummation. In dutiful obedience watch his very looks. Reply to any vindictive aspersions with meekness and composure, hoping he will yet learn to judge more kindly.”

“I shall steadfastly obey you,” said Emmeline ; “but there is another obstacle—he has given his

word to De Meudon should Rochfort perish by his sword."

"That is too improbable an event to be worth consideration," replied Sandford. "There is most to fear from your guardian's forcing a flight to France with that amusing knight. You know well how to guard against it; the fulfilment of your promise binds him to its condition. Under no circumstances leave this castle, or you are lost; even should these forces depart there will be watchers left in some secluded wood."

"Your words afford a comfort I cannot express," said Emmeline. "I will remain here to the end of life itself at your desire; but say you will still watch over me."

"Most assuredly," said Sandford. "I must part from you to witness scenes of death and peril. If we meet again it will be a day of brighter happiness, or a day on which the sun of our joy is set for ever."

“ You can never cease to dwell in my bosom,” replied Emmeline. “ Yet will I wait these events patiently and in hope—a hope not resting on earthly succour, but a placid trust in heaven for your deliverance and welfare. May God bless and protect you. Hark ! it is my uncle’s voice again speaking—I dare not remain. Oh ! once more, farewell !”

“ Farewell !” exclaimed Sandford, clasping the lovely girl to his bosom. “ One word more, and remember it as the last I spoke—Come what will, remain close in the Castle.”

They parted ; Emmeline tripped swiftly back to the sick lord’s couch, while Sandford continued his observations on the defences. With what different emotions the loving girl returned. He was still the same. She had not been blamed or deemed ungrateful. He even commended her prudence. Her guide in sorrow’s darkest hour, he had turned the moments of despair into the

pleasures of hope. She received such consolation that, with a light heart, scarce conscious of what she did, the maiden seized the noble lord's hand, cool and free from recent fever. Then caressing her guardian, now refreshed with a light sleep, the words came with impulsive emotion, forgetting the consequences that might ensue—

“We are saved; I told you it would be so. Oh! my dearest guardian, how can we be sufficiently thankful. Help came from whence I anticipated; he had—”

Then suddenly checking herself, she vainly endeavoured to hide her blushing cheeks from view.

This maiden confusion was soon perceived by the noble lord. As one just aroused from some mysterious dream, he stared vacantly on his blooming niece. There was still much alloy in his thoughts. In regret he deemed his niece to have thrown herself away on one unworthy of

her. His vanity was mortified, though he could not refuse a tribute of just and honourable thanks for their rescue. In the jumble of these conflicting sentiments, the noble invalid also forgot his promises, and looking intently on the trembling girl, he exclaimed, in a sharp tone of voice that revived all the past fears—

“Where’s De Meudon?”

“He has left in the ship that brought the provisions,” answered Emmeline, timidly.

“He has forsaken us. Stay, no,” said Savoy, “he will gather levies and pursue this De Vere to bay. It is to him at last we must look for final succour, though our thanks are due to another for this temporary relief. When did the ship leave?”

“At day dawn yesterday,” said the girl, with a still palpitating heart. She had not courage to question this disparagement of Sandford’s energies.

“Then the communication was open to

France," returned Savoy, "Why did you not fly with De Meudon? Would to God my senses had been spared."

"Oh! my dearest uncle, you have forgotten," cried Emmeline. "This fever has confused the past in your mind, you promised not to coerce me if I submitted to a greater sacrifice."

"My child, you are right," replied Savoy. "In an earnest moment you forgot the conditions, yet it was impossible to withhold the intelligence of this relief. I have been equally remiss. Let it pass from remembrance. From this moment we exchange a ratification of our vow, but you must remember the one reservation."

"I promise again most faithfully," said Emmeline, "I will never deceive you. Oh! uncle, fulfil your part and trust me evermore."

"I will endeavour to do so," answered Savoy. "Now tell me where is this young man, whose name from henceforth is a forbidden word?"

“He is in the Castle,” said Emmeline, with increased confusion.

“Is he here still?” exclaimed Savoy; “have you seen him?”

“I have expressed our thanks, it was impossible to withhold them. You are not so devoid of generosity as to forbid that,” answered Emmeline.

“You had better have left that office to me,” returned Savoy. “Now mark me, we cannot send him away while the enemy surrounds our stronghold. It would be ungracious and revengeful. He is entitled to gratitude and hospitality. I will see him in a day or two when equal to the exertion; yet listen. If you speak to him I shall deem my engagement absolved.”

“I shall obey you,” said Emmeline, unable to restrain a tear, which she wiped away before it met her guardian’s observation.

“Well,” said Savoy, “remain with me in this

chamber except when necessary rest compels your absence, you will then retire in charge of two attendants whom I will appoint."

"Oh! my dearest uncle, you have stung me to the heart," said Emmeline. "For days and nights I have watched beside your couch. For years have I deemed you my parent. Why inflict such sorrow on my innocent soul by a denial of confidence? Is not my word, spoken before Heaven, a solemn bond, a token of fidelity more reliable than the testimony of two menials who, perchance, might be bought if my spirit was so debased as to merit this unkindness? I would sooner suffer death than remain in this Castle watched as a prisoner under restraint."

"I beg forgiveness and will trust you," said Savoy, alarmed by the effect his determination had produced. She had turned away from the couch, and the maiden's feelings burst in a fit of hysterical excitement that required the administra-

tion of restoratives from the ever attentive domestics. When this outburst had calmed, Savoy took her gently by the hand, and continued in a clumsy endeavour to explain away his error—

“I never imagined for a moment that you should be considered as a prisoner,” said Savoy; “you much misunderstand me. I meant nothing but a consideration for your additional requirements after such exertions.”

“Oh! uncle,” said Emmeline, “I never believed the day would come when I should be threatened with restraint in the house of my childhood.”

“Then how can I testify my sincere regret?” said Savoy; “forgive me, say if you have any further request I can grant, and it shall be done.”

“Bear kindly with me,” replied Emmeline, “if I venture to make a request that may again

arouse your anger. When you see our good deliverer let me be present, though I promise to be silent."

"I would rather you had asked anything else," returned Savoy. "It would be better, far better, otherwise. Yet at the present moment I cannot refuse. Is it plainly understood that this concession does not affect our mutual engagements?"

"Yes, faithfully so, if you will," answered Emmeline. "I have no desire to revoke my solemn words?"

"Then it shall be so," returned Savoy. "Now retire and seek repose. I will not doubt you, or mistrust your actions. Conversation wearies me; I need greatly a short interval of quietude."

While Lady Emmeline quitted the chamber, Savoy laid his head on the pillow with much discomposure. He clearly observed his niece's motive for the request that circumstances had almost compelled him to grant. He had already

excited her feelings too far. In her presence he dare not utter one word of anger to the persevering youth, who deserved nothing but his thanks. If that objectionable attachment was to be got rid of, and he believed now in that impossibility, it must be by kindness and persuasion. To force the tender girl into an alliance with De Meudon might bring a consequence of deep sorrow. He could no longer doubt it. Was there no other who could win her affection? It must be tried. In this frame of mind he regretted the promise made to that young Knight, and sincerely prayed he might not be called upon to fulfil his bond—it was a rash act that might produce some unhappy result—but these are moments stolen from weariness, he slumbers calmly on that lonely couch.

After attending the ceremony of a solemn mass in the chapel, Emmeline retired to her chamber, wearied by nights of wakefulness and conflicting agitations. She endeavoured to for-

get her uncle's last ungracious act, and ruminating on Sandford's words of hope, she reclined upon her bed in joyful gratitude, firmly believing that all coercion in favour of De Meudon was at an end. She had dreaded this almost more than the artfulness of that villain from whose power she had been twice saved, by one never-failing protector. And she could even picture in fancy her uncle's prejudice softening before his parental love, though there was a whirling maelstrom that divided these two contending seas.

In these calm moments the favourite domestic ascended the battlements to seek the benefit of fresh air, so at least her mistress had been led to believe. It is perhaps going beyond facts to say the trusty servant had another motive, but we may venture to assert she had a cherished hope. A meeting with Sandford was not improbable. She deemed it an ordinary possibility. He is not there. A sentinel greets her approach with

suitable salutations, but not the earnest youth on whose behalf she felt such interest. On descending the tread-worn stairs he was passing her without recognition, absorbed in contemplation, scarcely aware of her presence. She tapped the thoughtful wanderer gently on the shoulder, and beckoned him into a small room, at the base of the stairs, first assuring herself that no one was near to overhear the conversation.

“Pardon my rudeness,” said the maid. “My mistress asleep I take an opportunity to tell you how unkindly her uncle has spoken.”

“Indeed,” said Sandford. “Surely she never mentioned my name?”

“She did once,” replied the maid; “but under deep emotion when she found her uncle better. That was not the cause of his threat; he said very little then.”

“Well, proceed; our time is short,” said Sandford.

“My lady told her uncle that you were in the Castle, in reply to his questions. He seemed vexed she had seen you, and desired her not to speak again. Then he continued that if she left the room she should be watched.”

“And what followed?” said Sandford.

“My lady,” continued the maid, “was much affected by this threat, and her uncle was sorry. He promised she should be present when he saw you, provided she was silent, and renewed her promise not to mention you any more—but they are calling me; my mistress is awake!”

“Then one moment,” said Sandford; “tell your mistress from me to keep her promise most strictly, and, above all things, not to forget my last words.”

This brief conversation enabled Sandford to draw some tolerably accurate conclusions as to Savoy’s motives. He had hurt his niece’s feelings, and soon repented of his act. It was

evident he would refrain from acting harshly towards that pure and innocent girl if not provoked. But would her spirit endure such cruelty and oppressive coercions? The noble Lord had so far relented, though still prejudiced with all former pride and stubbornness.

The noble invalid continued so weak and helpless that five days had passed since the ship left the bay, and no interview with Sandford had taken place. On the morrow the ship was expected in the calm of night. Since the communication made by the domestics, no further meeting with the fair lady was attempted. The young man contented himself with enquiries from that favourite servant, and so passed the time away in comparative solitude. It was evening, an active movement in the enemy's camp attracted Sandford's attention, the forces are drawn up in hostile array, and in alarm he deemed an immediate assault upon the Castle imminent.

After summoning every man to arms, and doubling the sentinels, the night was passed in constant speculations, every attention being paid to the sea approach. Again the morning dawned. Those tents so long visible from the massive walls are gone. The warlike forces had disappeared before the sun broke from the distant horizon. Was all secure, or was there a greater terror in that outward appearance of safety? It is more generally the hidden rocks than the visible waves that endanger a disabled bark.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Who could blame had I loved that face,
Ere my eye could twice explore her ;
Yet it is for the fairy intelligence there,
And her warm, warm heart I adore her.”

WOLFE.

AFTER quitting Pevensel's shallow waters, the little ship's progress was seriously impeded by the stillness of the elements. Every godly saint was invoked to no purpose. Perhaps with the jaded and adventurous travellers those holy guardians slept, or did they regard the coming enterprise with scornful aversion ? No refreshing

breeze followed these fervent prayers. The evening was far advanced, and the vessel stood reposing some five miles from the port of Hastings. Here De Mendon quitted his five companions, and, attended by six men, rowed to the shore in a small boat. After traversing a short and secluded path, he came to a small encampment of foreign levies, sent over for the Prince's assistance. The commander gladly accepted the benefit of his guidance. There was some considerable discussion, the young Knight directing a plan of operations which seemed best calculated to promote his scheme of pursuing Rochfort de Vere. A few days must elapse before the remaining forces could be landed, so there we leave him to make the best of his delusion, and return to the becalmed ship.

Shortly after the young gallant bid his friends adieu, the saints relented. A light wind filled those extended sails. The gliding bark spread

its wash far across the still glassy waters, and entered the long-desired port long before the vesper bell had ceased its sullen toll. The musicians, handsomely rewarded for their services, started on foot towards London, claiming hospitality on the road from every Castle that could be reached without serious digression. Conisburgh remained on board, where he found "metal more attractive," and Portevin was engaged in certain nautical preparations until a late hour had arrived. These completed, he lumbered down the narrow streets of Hastings like a boy proceeding unwillingly to a village school. Conisburgh and little Kitty followed closely after, exchanging many sly glances, and indulging occasionally in a playful pinch on the arm, or some similar diverting flirtation. At last the old home was reached, and the calm soon changed into a rising storm when Kitty's maternal parent opened the narrow door.

“ Better have made another night out,” said Rosanne Portevin, snappishly. “ I get no supper for you, nor for any drunken loon you may please to bring.”

“ I told you the wind would blow when we got home,” said Portevin, addressing Conisburgh. “ If our meal is a poor one, we must make it up in liquid comforts. Now, mistress, tell us where to find a morsel of bread, and you can go to sleep as soon as you like ; we want no apologies.”

“ And you would not get them if you did,” answered Rosanne. “ Have the goodness to tell this young man we want no brawlers here to-night. Why didn’t you find him a crib on board the ship ?”

“ Don’t insult better people than yourself the first time they come to the house,” said Portevin. “ If you won’t make the young man comfortable, you had better leave us to take care of him.”

“ Then make the best of what you can find,”

retorted Rosanne. "I have hid the wine and the lights; the food is in the small larder, so make yourself content to eat it in the dark."

"This is only her usual ways," said Portevin to Conisburgh, while the crabbed old woman retired. "You must not think she's in a rage—that's something indescribable—make yourself happy, Kitty will find us something."

"I know her holes and corners pretty well," said that active little maid; "see, here is a light, and there the best wine; now, be content, and I will knock up a good supper"—then, speaking to Conisburgh aside, she continued—"Isn't she a horrid old thing?"

While Portevin stepped out to speak with a few old friends, Kitty was as good as her word, an ample repast was soon spread, waiting her father's return. In this operation she, no doubt, received great assistance from Conisburgh's sense of politeness. There was scarcely a dish to be

moved but the youth was ready and willing. Often in these little offices their heads came to an unnecessary collision. A straw soon indicates the course of the wind's first breath. All is prepared, though the good master of the house is not returned; so, to beguile the interval time, Conisburgh sat down near the festive table, his arm encircling Kitty's waist, who amused herself by pulling the young aspirant's hair, and pushing it back from his brows by converting her fingers into a comb.

"Your mother is very ill-tempered, Kitty dear," said Conisburgh; "it must be miserable when your father is away."

"It is wretched," said Kitty. "He is seldom at home, and I am obliged to be entertained by the neighbours; to remain in the house with her is impossible."

"As you grow older it will be worse still," replied Conisburgh. "My friend Portevin is an ex-

cellent man ; but, Kitty dearest, he will not always be with you. Is there no other protector in view ?”

“ I have many friends,” said Kitty ; “ there is scarcely one who knows my father who would not protect me in need.”

“ But is there not one friend you could esteem more than all ?” answered Conisburgh. “ One that could be always at your side when your father was absent, and one on whom you could rely if he should be taken away ? He leads a dangerous life.”

“ Perhaps there is,” said Kitty, combing the young lover’s hair with increased energy. Yet I hope my father will be with us for many years to come.”

“ Earnestly I hope so,” replied Conisburgh ; “ but life is uncertain. Is there one, then, you can trust ? If so, let me dare to think he is now speaking. Dearest Kitty, you may confide in him faithfully.”

“ I will do so,” returned Kitty. “ May heaven bless you ! But hear me. I promised my father to be his companion in some distant voyages, and I should not wish to leave him yet.”

“ Nor could it be,” said Conisburgh. “ My fortunes are bound up with another. Nominally I am in Savoy’s service, though my real master is a banished and wandering young man. He may some day receive me as his own servant ; yet should misfortune beset his path, I will follow him to death in need, or serve him faithfully in prosperity, if God is pleased to will it so.”

“ Then it is a sacred promise,” answered Kitty. “ I will be yours in prosperity or in trouble ; so let us contemplate the brighter picture, and prolong a joyful night.”

“ With all my heart,” replied Conisburgh. “ Your father is gone a long time ; doubtless he has many friends in the port.”

“ There are plenty to drink his wine, if that is

a proof of friendship," said Kitty. "When in port he generally looks up his acquaintances, though he seldom stays out so late as this."

"Possibly he is relating his adventure to some confidential associate," said Conisburgh, "or listening behind the door to our little small talk."

"Oh! no, he is not there," exclaimed Kitty. "Generally he comes blundering up the stairs as if expecting the ship to lurch. We shall soon know when he is approaching."

"Where's the old woman?" said Conisburgh. "Will she sit up for him below?"

"Not she," said Kitty (mistaken for once); "she will sleep sound, and wake up more cross than ever. Suppose we begin," she continued, glancing at the supper; "I am hungry enough to eat all that's on the table."

"I am a willing helpmate again," returned Conisburgh. "No doubt your father will find a crumb and a glass or two somewhere."

The repast was discussed with many little pleasant interruptions, the wine driving all dull and unhappy thoughts away. Again aided by Conisburgh, Kitty, careful for her absent father, put by a sufficient meal to satisfy any three men of ordinary appetite. This ceremony was hardly concluded before a most unwelcome disturbance prevented many little soft passages of love. A measured and steady tread is heard upon the stairs. It is not the father's, but it is a parental footstep. Suddenly the door burst open, and the crabbed mother strode into the room, carrying her head as erect as possible, and, brushing scornfully past the lover, she took her seat a short distance from the table. It is hardly requisite to state that she was the first to speak.

“If Portevin insists on bringing every lazy glutton to the house he had better stop and entertain them. What unearthly hours!”

“It must be a pleasure to have so many

friends," said Conisburgh. "His absence will be less felt when my worthy hostess supplies the vacant place. Permit me to pass this cup of wine."

"Wine, indeed!" said the hostess; "there's enough drunk if he is at home. The liquid consumed in this house last year would drown two strong men."

"The better reason why we should honour his absence. Come, here's to his health," said Conisburgh.

"Was there ever such a reckless man?" answered the hostess. "He is sharp enough on board the ship, but once at home he lets everybody make free. I wish he would go a long voyage."

"He will go a long voyage some day, like the rest of mankind," returned Conisburgh, "a journey from which there is no return; so make the best of it while he is here. You would not like to lose him; there have been many shipwrecks lately."

“ I do not wish him quite so far away,” said the hostess. “ Likely enough he would be glad to see my end. Stay ! here he comes, at last ; That was his voice—I will wager a butt of wine on it.”

“ You are mistaken, mother,” said Kitty, peeping through a crevice in the closed lattice. “ There are six men running down the street, scampering too fast for any good at this time of night.”

“ It was him, I will take an oath,” replied the hostess ; “ he’s gone off again with some pot-valiant companions.”

“ I don’t believe it, mother,” said Kitty, “ he only went to our good neighbour’s opposite ; so let us have patience. Here, take this wine, if only to pass time away.”

“ Well, I will drink it to please you,” answered the maternity ; “ there will be time enough to take fifty cups before he comes back.”

“Then let this be the second,” said Conisburgh, replenishing the horns. “The remaining forty-eight we will reserve until our friend is here to assist.”

“He will have had quite enough before that,” said the hostess. “What ill-timed piece of foolery has he been about this two days?”

“He has been engaged in a good work,” replied Conisburgh; “helping a friend in need, and foiling the designs of a hard-hearted tyrant.”

“There, I want to hear no more!” retorted Rosanne Portevin. “He is always at the beck and call of some paltry adventurer; anything serves as an excuse to keep away from home.”

“Come, come, you judge too hastily,” remonstrated Conisburgh, “though it is getting late, and the lights are nearly burnt out.”

“You will have no more to-night, I will sit in the dark first,” said the hostess. “Look through the crevice again, Kitty.”

"I can see no one," said the young creature, beginning to shed tears; "it is very strange."

"Oh! don't be frightened," said Conisburgh, "he is only making a night of it with his friend yonder. Wait till we are quite in the dark, and I will ferret him out."

"This is just my life, young man," said the hostess. Every night he brings a houseful of sotting wretches, or runs wandering after them till daybreak. There shall be an end to it. I will leave the house when he is on shore."

"The light is out now," said Kitty, "so I will rest no longer. Do see if he is at the old house with the round lattice; he is never so late as this."

As Conisburgh rose, the light quivered in three faint flickers and vanished. All was darkness, and the crabbed housewife moved towards the chamber door. In merry hours her very look had appalled the bravest spirits, while stinging words

faltered on her cross-grained tongue. At that moment her tall shadow, moving slowly down the creaking stairs, would strike a chill through the stoutest frame. Step by step she trod her way, the shadow lengthening like an approaching spectre. The anxious lover caught that trembling girl in his arms. Her sprightly humours were checked for the first time during her brief existence. It was a solemn moment. The door is opened ; the mother standing behind its shelter to avoid any gazers that might be watching from the little round lattice. Again the youth clasped the terror-stricken girl to his bosom, then conducting her back to the room, he placed her in a chair, and vainly endeavoured to calm her fears. The old backbiter is impatient. Quickly he rushed down the staircase, and ran along a narrow passage to the road ; then suddenly stumbling over a black object, he fell

heavily to the ground, while unobserved the door closed behind him.

No mountebank could have regained his feet with greater celerity than Conisburgh did at that untoward moment. He looked back and beheld the brawny form of his newly acquired friend prostrate and still as earth. Had he been making a night of it, indulging freely with his kindly neighbour? Had he fallen, and, overpowered with narcotic stimulants, sunk to sleep? It was the long sleep of death. The moon broke through a passing cloud, and penetrating the narrow alley shone ghastly upon the pallid corpse. The young man called loudly. There was no response. He knelt beside the stiffening body ; still incredulous, he shook it violently. But all is silence. Then stooping he beheld that gore-stained head smashed with cruel blows. That noble heart which gloried in many a daring enterprise was pierced with numerous wounds. One dagger re-

mained undrawn. How often Conisburgh had beheld the wretched prisoner writhing in slow torture in the dungeons at Hurstingham, a sight he endured with calmness compared to the horror now before him. With trembling hand he withdrew the fatal weapon. It bore a well-known mark, a distinction used by officers in Rochfort de Vere's service.

“That ill-tempered old witch was right; ‘it was his voice.’ The retreating men descried by Kitty were the murderers. It must be so,” reasoned the youth. “The plot for relieving Pevensel is discovered. To remain would involve the certainty of a similar fate; he must fly into concealment.”

Without loss of time Conisburgh aroused some sympathising neighbours, desiring them to break the horrible tidings, and to explain the cause of his flight. We will not dwell on the misery of that broken-hearted child. She was even de-

barred the consolations of her newly acquired lover. After remaining in concealment the following day, the young man made his way at nightfall to the camp of the foreign levies, where De Meudon had preceded him ; and little Kitty was shortly afterwards removed to Seaford, abiding with her murdered father's brother, while Conisburgh's fortunes were at stake.

CHAPTER XII.

“Those flimsy webs that break as soon as wrought,
Attain not to the dignity of thought,
Nor yet the swarms that occupy the brain,
Where dreams of dress, intrigue, and pleasure reign,
Nor such as useless conversation breeds,
Or lust engenders, or indulgence feeds.”

COWPER.

It is probable Portevin's life would have been spared had De Vere's energetic officer been aware that empty promises, instead of present substance, was all the result his exertions would attain. A native of Hastings, this aspiring man recognised the little vessel in the grey twilight, and con-

trived an immediate project of revenge, while his master laid senseless from the effects of his fall, when struck by the ponderous stone.

A reward promised for past exertion is generally conditioned upon some future service. If any consolatory reflections could result from verbal commendations, these were conferred in profusion, accompanied with large dissertations on the pecuniary advantage that would result from the capture of Sandford, or the seizure of Lady Emmeline. So the officer quitted his master's presence. A small sum abstracted from Portevin's pockets satisfied the menials who aided in the murder, and the credit and renown proved the leader's guerdon.

The lapse of four or five days did not suffice to cool the vindictiveness of De Vere's temper. Sitting at the entrance of his tent he was hatching a scheme to assault the Castle, and to put all the inmates to death, except Savoy, and the fair lady

deemed his prize. It was of course necessary to procure the co-operation of his companion in arms, and while he mounted, intending to seek that commander, a messenger dashed swiftly by, disregarding Rochfort's exclamations. This functionary passed on to De Mountfort's tent, followed by the designing knight, who had vainly endeavoured to arrest his progress.

"I have some unwelcome intelligence," said De Mountfort; "these scrolls tell me your followers have all deserted. Hurstingham remains in the custody of four or five officers who await your commands."

"Then let them abide my pleasure," answered Rochfort. "These disasters arise from this craven waste of time. Pevensel should have been assaulted weeks since, and must be attempted at once. Shall it be to-night?"

"It shall be to-night," replied De Mountfort.

“Not to assault Pevensel, but to march to my father’s assistance. He is almost surrounded by the Prince’s levies. I will dally no longer to satisfy the pleasure or intrigue of the best Knight in England.”

“Your former courage has degenerated into cowardice,” said Rochfort. “Week after week our armies have looked on in listless inactivity. That youth whom your father released bewilders us with his cunning, and now we suffer him to exult over our failure and to watch our disgrace from yonder towers.”

“It is gall and bitterness to me, I admit,” said De Mountfort. “I would fain chastise him as he deserves; but we cannot be reckless. Our forefathers never attempted those walls with twice the force we command.”

“Then let the sons show the greater gallantry,” answered De Vere. “I will lead the way. The prospect of such rich booty will induce many to

follow, and two days' exertion may atone for weeks of idleness."

"It is an act of desperation," said De Mountfort, "yet I will consider of it before sunset."

"Our work should then begin," answered Rochfort; "delay is dangerous. Why hesitate between two opinions? Say one word and I will see all is in readiness."

"Get you gone then," said De Mountfort; "I will do my part; when once we advance there is no blenching, we rush headlong to honour or death."

All is excitement and anticipation. The various detachments are marshalled by Rochfort de Vere, and march to their respective stations before the Castle. The movement is soon perceived within the fortress, and Sandford distributes his men to await the attack. Night closes in, and the massive phalanxes grow dim and faint like a

dissolving view. Then in silence, expectation increases as the hours roll away; all wait the word to advance, when the hoarse blast of a loud trumpet broke the calmness of the distant hills.

The winding sound approached nearer and nearer. All became suddenly impressed with a consciousness that a change of tactics was imminent. De Mountfort canters on a fleet charger to meet the coming horseman, his agitation showing a dread that some disastrous intelligence awaited him, while De Vere stood breathless in amazement. The latter was the first to regain self-possession, remaining at his post until summoned to his companion's presence.

The scion of Leicester was surrounded by numerous officers, who listened to his directions with earnest attention. These subordinates soon made way for De Vere's horse, which, startled by some moving shadow, reared and kicked to the

dismay of every bystander. The animal at last brought to a standstill, the rider dismounted, standing beside De Mountfort. He was handed another scroll, and accosted with these significant words—

“We march to-night, you must recall your men immediately.”

“Your purposes change with every fresh breath of wind,” said Rochfort. “I will no longer act in this matter, recall them with your own voice. Let all see who is the coward.”

“If I am the coward you are the fool,” retorted De Mountfort, with rising anger. “Read that scroll, and see that I proceed from necessity not from choice. It leaves me no discretion.”

“You are right so far; I crave pardon,” replied De Vere, turning pale with vexation, after perusing a document positively commanding the departure of the forces. “Yet I hold you responsible for

this dallying. We have become the laughing stock of our opponents."

"Truly that may be," answered De Mountfort, "especially those who had no other object but selfish indulgence; am I to recall the men, or do you spare me the necessity?"

"The thing is indispensable, so I may as well do it," rejoined De Vere. "Could you not leave me a sufficient force to continue the enterprise?"

"It is impossible; we have barely sufficient already," returned De Mountfort. "What I could leave would be overpowered by the levies arriving at Hastings, when added to the garrison."

"You counsel truly," said Rochfort; "then leave three small detachments of fifty men each. Let them lay in ambush to watch this Castle. I will accompany you and render every aid in my power."

"I accept your proposal cheerfully," replied De Mountfort, "place them at your discretion,

and lose not a moment. I will march at once with such as are ready. You will follow with the others in three hours. Fail me not."

"I give you my solemn word," said De Vere; "had we been as active in the attack as I will show myself in the retreat the Castle would have been ours."

It is no uncommon delusion to judge by our own impressions of the effect some striking circumstance produces on the mind of another. While the army retired Rochfort could only picture one scene to his imagination. He could see Sandford, looking from those gradually fading towers, exulting in his victory, while far more substantial considerations influenced that young man's mind. He knew from former experience the disastrous effect of Savoy's confidence when no danger was outwardly apparent. The noble lord's resentment would probably increase, though he little regarded that, if not likely to involve the Lady

Emmeline in any new disaster. It has already been stated that the possibility of concealed watchers was not overlooked by that devoted youth.

In order to correctly understand the future adventures of our fair heroine, it will be necessary to follow the course of warriors now retreating from Pevensel. During the two or three following days frequent altercations took place between the leaders concerning the direction of the march. The men, disappointed of the booty anticipated from the reduction of the Castle, broke out in open discontent. Something must be contrived by way of compensation ; so the commanders hatched a scheme to meet the emergency. That continually disturbed, and often violated populace, the inhabitants of Winchester, had perhaps shewn a more marked loyalty to the Crown than any city throughout the land. Its castle had always remained a stronghold of the King's adherents.

A full and complete permission to sack these unhappy citizens was shortly issued, and also to murder every one that offered resistance. Another day's march brought the armed warriors before those ancient walls; the gates were closed, and both entreaties and threats failed to procure admittance.

It is evident that inconvenient delay must transpire before the city could be coerced. The necessity of masking its old walls, and of leaving the inhabitants in quietude was under discussion, when Rochfort de Vere's person was recognised by two Priests from Dunsmore, who were temporarily located at the Convent of St. Swithin. A rope was lowered from the window of that holy establishment, and De Vere was hauled within its venerable confines. By his direction several more followed, and when a little band had been collected, they rushed suddenly upon the gate, throwing it open to their companions. The scene

which followed was one of indescribable horror, every house was pillaged, and the murder of the inhabitants almost amounted to a general massacre. Even those who submitted quietly to be plundered shared no better fate; scenes of revelry succeeded, during which Rochfort conversed with the two ecclesiastics, and a third holy Father, to whom he was hitherto a stranger.

“ My Lord is aware that the Queen has arrived from Flanders,” said the strange Priest; “ she is now at Guildford, waiting her son’s directions.”

“ Is it truly so?” answered Rochfort. “ Have you travelled in her company?”

“ I have,” said the Priest, “ and much I perceive her son is not well affected towards our Mother Church. I can speak a word that much concerns my noble Lord, though it is first necessary to understand each other on matters of great importance.”

“ Well, say on,” answered Rochfort. “ What

are your demands? I never spoke to a Priest yet, except that was the first consideration."

"These holy brethren are poor," continued the Priest; "almost before it is asked, one half of my Lord's share in the just retribution inflicted on the godless inhabitants of this city will, doubtless, be conferred by your noble generosity."

"To be reasonable, we will say a fourth," answered De Vere, "provided there is anything which concerns me that will serve as an equivalent."

"Nay, then," said the Priest, retiring, "my Lord is more unjust to our Holy Mother than his enemies. So be it; the fair Lady of Pevensel shall remain in peace."

"Be not angry, my good Father," returned Rochfort, in a more soothing tone; "take all you ask, I only wish to be reasonable; forgive me if I am under misapprehension. Where is the fair lady?"

“Still at Pevensel with her uncle,” continued the Priest; “the noble Lord is prostrate from the effects of a lowering fever, so there they remain for a week or two.”

“Pray go on,” said Rochfort, eagerly.

“I beg forgiveness,” said the Priest; “my Lord will need an indulgence to proceed in this enterprise that will involve a separate consideration.”

“I will not fail you,” replied Rochfort; “once more say on. What are the lady’s movements when her uncle is convalescent?”

“The Queen,” said the Priest, “has summoned Savoy and his niece to her presence at Guildford. Place your watch round the Castle, and my brethren would gladly receive the fair lady in this establishment until you require her presence at Hurstingham.”

De Vere was too well versed in these cunning arts to be caught by this plausible proposal.

Should the lady come into that house it would involve some enormous consideration to get her away, even beyond the promised share of the plunder. He determined to acquiesce to all appearance, and privately to order his guards to conduct the lady direct to Hurstingham, should she venture from the Castle. But, without prolonging these reflections, he continued his exhortations to the Holy Father.

“ I will confide her to your care, and further sums will reward your kindness ; she will remain here until the Prince’s armies are vanquished.”

“ You are a worthy churchman,” replied the holy man ; “ now, listen, and I will take you a little further into my confidence ; the Queen has sent for Savoy by her son’s desire.”

“ Indeed,” said Rochfort ; “ and for what reason ?”

“ It seems that Lady Emmeline has become

attached to a young franklin who aided in the Prince's escape," continued the Priest.

"That is already known to me," answered Rochfort; "he shall live only to repent his presumption."

"It is base and unpardonable presumption," said the Priest, "Savoy very properly deems it so."

"Then, why does the Queen send for him?" replied Rochfort. "I could understand it if Savoy was favourable; she would immediately remonstrate, and send the young lady into a convent."

"You are mistaken," said the Priest; "my Lady the Queen desires to influence Savoy in the young man's favour. It is an ungodly work, that will provoke the wrath of heaven; the lady is my Lord's by right and justice."

"And shall be mine by force in need," said Rochfort. "Wait until this arrogant Prince is

crushed, and these treacherous nobles who have dared to support him. My Holy Father's reward shall be great."

At this juncture the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of De Mountfort. The holy men at once quitted the apartment; one usually set apart for guests. The commander strode across the old stone floor with evident satisfaction at the day's proceedings; he was elated with good liquor, and excited by such a sudden acquisition of treasure. He regarded Rochfort with a look of dignified scorn, and burst out in a voice that the Holy Fathers in the adjoining chamber easily overheard.

"A just partition of this spoil is a needful consideration," said De Mountfort, "under present emergencies the men must be bought over. Say what should fall to their share; and then let us consider how to dispose of the remainder."

"To my mind it is an easy calculation," replied

Rochfort. "Say one third is distributed to the men; the rest we may divide."

"To the first proposition I yield a ready assent," returned De Mountfort; "the second is not quite to my fancy, except under a few reservations."

"You are a worthy son of a rapacious father," replied De Vere. "The men satisfied, you would engross the rest. My base followers are already with the Prince; be careful, or their old master will lead them once more to battle."

"You would make a good jester," said De Mountfort; "join the Prince's standard—become subservient to your despised rival—he stands on Pevensel's towers, exulting at your ill-success—go, I say, or listen to my terms."

"Speak then," said Rochfort, "and let them suit my temper better than your manners, or I will do my utmost to your destruction."

"Then hear," continued De Mountfort. "Your

followers have already forsaken their master; the domain of Pevensel has been conferred upon you, and possession shall be enforced. You must cede your claim in these spoils to maintain a sufficient number of men to replace those who have deserted."

"Now, listen," said Rochfort, trembling with rage he found it compulsory to suppress. "Your forces are a motley group, intent on nothing but plunder. Discontent was causing deserters to leave the ranks daily. At my suggestion the plunder of this city was undertaken, the only means by which the torrent of insubordination could be stopped. Without my assistance not a man could have passed those gates. I say you are a faithless poltroon, whose followers shall vanish like my own."

"I will trouble you to advance your reasons unaccompanied by insolent epithets," replied De Mountfort. "It is quite apparent that with my

father's cause your own must stand or fall ; so I shall consider my terms accepted."

"A curse upon your avarice," said Rochfort. "I deem them utterly repudiated. Let us proceed on the march. I am so far willing to yield that the question shall be left to your father's decision."

"To that alternative I am ready to agree," replied De Mountfort. "He will grant no compromise. Do not anticipate it, though I will engage he shall assist in any project of revenge you may desire to execute."

"They will be many, then," said De Vere ; "it will be a dear bargain for my noble Earl ; he has foes not to be despised. You must satisfy these holy fathers."

"Let them be satisfied with our condescension in accepting their hospitality," said De Mountfort, "we have no leisure for argument, and can find a more fitting season to prattle our confessions."

"I am ready," said De Vere; "this time I will lead the way. Shall we march upon Oxford, or bend our course upon the City of Gloucester?"

"I have received commands to join my father at Worcester," returned De Mountfort; "then we intend attacking the Prince with all our forces united. Haste you away to Oxford first."

"There you will find me," said De Vere. "These angry discussions blacken like the shadow of some coming disaster."

As Rochfort had obtained all the information from the old priest that could be of service, he was quite indifferent whether the holy father was satisfied, or mulcted of his gain. The two warriors left the convent unceremoniously. Having listened to the conversation with earnestness, the three holy fathers gazed at each other in vacant consternation. It was a rare exception, but the old ecclesiastic had driven an unfavourable bargain for once.

Though the disappointment of the troops before the sacking of Winchester was a dangerous rock in the sea of discontent, the licentious revelry which followed that lawless act of barbarism seemed to bring a greater evil. The march to Oxford was accomplished with the utmost difficulty, the men riotous, the officers eager for plunder. That city, warned by the fate of Winchester, opened its gates ; the forces passed through, and halting at Kenilworth for two or three days, beguiled the time with every excess of drunken buffoonery. Here let them wallow in the mire of indulgence to their hearts' content, others better deserve our sympathy, so having traced our way from Pevensel to Winchester, from Winchester to Oxford, and from that ancient university to Kenilworth, we step back with one rapid stride, and with one short step further we stand in the confines of the Castle.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Old man, I do respect
Thine order, and revere thy years ; I deem
Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain.
Think not so churlish. I would spare thyself
Far more than me, as shunning at this time
All further colloquy, and so farewell.”

BYRON'S *Manfred*.

A FEW days after the besieging forces left Pevensel, De Meudon advanced with the foreign levies ; and when sufficiently near to ensure a safe communication, he despatched Conisburgh to inform the noble Lord that he had already started in pursuit of Rochfort de Vere, and to convey

the intelligence of Portevin's cruel death. The former communication was sent on a written scroll, the latter was confided to a verbal message.

"That was his voice," faintly muttered a maiden, standing without a small ante-chamber.

She might listen, though she dare not speak. It was his voice—he alone—that could lighten the burden of sorrow's watchful hour. Emmeline had retired from her uncle's couch, when these sounds met her ear. The tones were manly but not loud. They spoke of horror that chilled the maiden blood flowing through that tender form. She staggered, and exclaimed—

"Oh! help me, I shall fall."

Sandford and Conisburgh rushed from the chamber; the former caught the trembling girl in his arms; while Savoy, rising from his couch for the first time, was endeavouring to walk with the assistance of two attendants. That cry for

help reached his ear, the door is opened, and the noble Lord confronts the youth to whose succour he owed all that was dear on earth. Could he not trust the fair girl? Did that pure tongue utter deception? were her promises faithless? Such were the noble guardian's delusions. Oh! heaven, was it that unworthy youth, who for his selfish designs put falsehood in her mouth, contaminating the purity of a once devoted and innocent child?"

On entering the Castle, Conisburgh delivered the scroll written by De Meudon to Savoy. Then, with that promptness which characterised his usual proceedings, the youthful servant enquired for Sandford, who was at that moment in a chamber adjoining the sick Lord's; requesting an interview, as he purposed leaving to join the levies then in sight. All was deemed secure, if the fair one would remain in the stronghold. The Prince's campaign offered a field for enterprise

and distinction, and even if Savoy tolerated his presence, he was leading a life of unbearable indolence for one of so energetic a nature.

While Sandford awaited the noble Lord's reply, Conisburgh related a full account of poor Portevin's fate. The adventurous youth was much excited and dismayed by this horrible intelligence, though its effect on the listener that outward stayed was far more appalling. Her limbs trembled, the red blood forsook those lovely cheeks ; she quivered from head to foot in a cold shiver. Nights of broken rest and days of painful anxiety had left a visible evidence of their baneful influence ; the tale of horror had sent a shock through that delicate frame, already emaciated with wakefulness and care. She noticed a change in her uncle's countenance—he doubted her—then with a piercing cry she covered her features in inward agony. Sandford, regardless of consequences that Savoy's presence might entail,

kissed her pallid brow. She is consigned to the domestics, and the invalid was deprived of his watchful nurse for several days, though he was relieved of her presence at the approaching interview.

When Lady Emmeline had been removed to the quietude of her chamber, Savoy retired to his couch, supported by the same attendants. He beckoned Sandford to follow him. The servants are ordered to withdraw, and our young aspirant sat piercing the noble Lord's face with a vivid and intelligent eye, which outwardly indicated the vigour of the inward mind. It was a look not void of effect. A conscience loaded with a sense of perpetrated injustice quailed before its power. There was an impressive silence, which the venerable noble at last found courage to break.

"It is my purpose to be plain," said Savoy. "Having awaited in vain any explanation of your presumption in violating the rules of hos-

pitality always shown in this Castle, I am compelled to speak. If I am obliged to subdue my anger you must solely attribute it to sense of obligation for your service."

"And with my lord's permission I will consider it due to a consciousness of injustice inflicted on one who has risked his life to render that service," answered Sandford, firmly.

"If I have done you any injustice let that be forgotten," said Savoy.

"Then let us destroy its proof," returned Sandford, producing the scroll forwarded by Savoy to denounce him as a spy. "If any satisfaction, learn that it has met no eye but mine. I am willing to forget the occurrence and leave it to my lord's generosity to acknowledge any obligation or not, as he may deem most agreeable."

"I would that you had never known of this," replied Savoy. "It is mysterious that the document should fall into your possession."

“It is a mystery, and such it shall ever remain,” said Sandford. “Lost in its transit to Wigmore it reached my hands, and a consideration for my lord’s honour induced me to withhold it.”

“Then accept my thanks,” said Savoy; “and it would please me well to bestow any recompense you may demand.”

“There is nothing I would accept, even to an offer of all your possessions,” replied Sandford. “I should deem such an estimate of my services an insult.”

“I am at no loss to comprehend,” said Savoy, “though your words are skilfully clothed in a garb of attempted mystification. I dare you to ask it openly, great as your assumption may be; and remember, the gates of this Castle are closed against you for ever, unless you accept a pecuniary reward as an equivalent of my obligations.”

“To the latter alternative I return the same

answer as before," replied Sandford. "If my words are not plain enough I will speak in unmistakeable shape. I love your niece, and for her sake have dared every peril these times of oppression can create."

"I will bear no more," said Savoy, interrupting the young man. "You have wronged me, and brought disgrace on my house. My young niece you incite to falsehood and ingratitude. She has promised to banish your name from her thoughts, yet you meet her clandestinely, and urge her to disobedience. I say away, your presence in this Castle is loathsome to my sight."

"It is impossible to oppose argument to prejudice," replied Sandford, calmly. "To assertions so unfounded and irrational I can best reply by declining all further colloquy at present. Your years are entitled to respect. Thrust me from the Castle, if such a course is consistent with my lord's sense of courtesy; yet will my

care be exercised over one weak and tender creature, whose safety shall not be imperilled by your rashness or oversight."

"By the holy faith of my fathers, this is beyond endurance," answered Savoy. "Presuming on my hospitality, you have won the affections of a confiding girl, without my knowledge or sanction, aspiring to a position for which your rank is a fatal disqualification. And not content with violating the sanctity of my paternal care, you assume an authority over all the servants in my household."

"I possess their obedience it is true," said Sandford; "not from authority, but from confidence in my good intentions. There is not a word I ever uttered in this Castle that I would not repeat in your presence; no act I would recall. I go now to join the Prince's army, and, with all humility, may you live long enough to recant your assertions."

“I am too weak to resent this insolence, or you might repent it on the spot,” returned Savoy. “The Prince shall be acquainted with it; and neither will I suffer your minions to remain in my service, it is only a medium of communication to my niece. I am her guardian, and dare your interference.”

“I will not attempt to pursue an argument already declined,” replied Sandford. “As regards the Prince, I shall probably anticipate you by conveying the intelligence myself. The rest is incomprehensible, unless it refers to Conisburgh.”

“You might be sure that it does,” returned Savoy. “A fitting servant for a deceitful master. Take the knave with you, or he remains at his peril. Begone—begone!”

“One word more, which, referring to the dead, must be spoken in calmness,” said Sandford. “In my effort to relieve this Castle, I was assisted by Peter Portevin. This fact was by some means

discovered, and that brave man has been murdered by De Vere's officers. There is a widow and one unhappy child; confer upon them any reward you may consider I am entitled to claim."

"Was it to Portevin that I am indebted for this service?" returned Savoy. "It shall be done. You will then consider all obligations between us satisfied."

"I will, for their sake," replied Sandford. "May God spare us to meet again. For the present, farewell."

It was requisite to acquaint Conisburgh with the noble Lord's determination. From his lips it soon spread, and probably would have led to an unpleasant uproar, but for Sandford's interference. Perhaps that despised youth was less disconcerted than anyone in the Castle. The first he spoke to was Emmeline's favourite domestic, charging her to convey his farewell to her mistress, and once more to repeat his last words. He

declined to partake of a banquet prepared to celebrate his late success, and, rushing through the assembled men-at-arms, who loudly murmured their disapprobation, he bid them faithfully serve their master, and obey his commands. He told them that yet he hoped all would be well. Then, followed by Conisburgh, he hastened quickly along the ranks. The draw-bridge is passed ; the outward walls no longer exclude the distant landscape ; he is gone.

The sentiments which influenced Sandford at that moment are equally produced by many incidents in modern life. On the face of this fair earth, few have not some spot associated with the happiest days of their life. Its memory is treasured. The adieu of many a kind friend may still be dear, when necessity prompts some active exertion in busy scenes of life. Sandford scarcely ventured to look round upon those venerable walls. They were the haunt of his

fondest hopes. There dwelt the object of his ambition. But the sterner duties of a patriot were now before him. He would not shrink from them, though his hopes might be for ever blighted, though he was forbidden the hospitality so many years deemed a privilege, and though Savoy's prejudice was so strong that the Prince's influence might be impotent. He soon dismissed these considerations when standing before De Meudon, who now commanded the small troop of foreign levies.

For several days the possibility of disengaging Lady Emmeline's affections from Sandford haunted the noble Lord's thoughts. It was day-dawn, heavy clouds hung upon the old towers indicating a coming tempest. An obstreperous knocking is heard at the Castle's gate. A well-caparisoned horse is standing outside, the rider demanding shelter. Does he bring tidings of coming joy? The clamour is continued, and at

length the jarring portal rings open. The stranger enters, and disposing of his jaded horse, hands in a scroll, which is instantly taken to the weak and recumbent Lord. It is most welcome; the Queen desires the presence of Savoy and his niece at Guildford. He must not fail; it is a matter that deeply concerns the Lady's happiness.

"This is a priceless jewel," mused the noble Lord. "The glitter of the court, the number of lordly favourites, ready to do the maiden homage, will drive this fancy from her brain. It concerns her happiness; there is a better and more wealthy suitor. How unhappy that I should be thus emaciated! In three weeks we go; heaven bless the enterprise!"

The old man calls for a writing tablet, and re-addresses the scroll to that effect. The stranger lingered a sufficient time to refresh his animal, and after partaking of a good meal, started on the return journey.

Whether this functionary's intellect was confused with the good cheer, or whether the violence of the now descending storm induced him to enter a path closely entwined with overhanging trees, it is not in our power to determine ; but having once entered this labyrinth, he found it an insoluble puzzle to extricate himself from its complication. At last he reached an open plot of ground, where several men sheltered themselves from the rain under a wide-spreading beech. In a moment the adventurer was seized, dragged from his horse, and tied to a tree. The scroll is overhauled, and largely commented upon ; when, to the messenger's astonishment, he is told to depart on his mission, a safe and ready road being pointed out with more than ordinary politeness. He is wending his way joyfully, while De Vere's watchers march stealthily to a wood near Guildford, entering into the most extravagant calcula-

tions concerning the future rewards and present plunder which await them.

It is generally said there must be two parties to a bargain. Here are three at least. The eager and determined lord, the wary watchers ; but there is also the faithful maiden, who is enjoined not to leave the Castle. Savoy first purposed to keep the project a secret until the last moment, fearing his ward might be influenced ; the second parties were closely on the alert ; the third lies on her bed worried and anxious, wondering if her lover and guardian have yet met. If so, in what spirit ? Is he still in the Castle, or does some further undertaking, worthy of his energies, engross his constant thoughts ? The favourite maid is at her side, and with that zeal with which servants are generally ready to communicate a bit of news, she soon exposed the truth.

“ I am charged to bid you a loving farewell,” said the maid.

“Is he gone then?” said Emmeline, starting on her bed. “When? did he see my uncle?”

“He had an interview with your uncle, and is forbidden to enter this Castle again,” continued the maid; “Conisburgh is also dismissed.”

“Oh! that heaven had spared my strength,” said Emmeline; “entreaties might have prevented this. I will strictly remember his last commands.”

“Pardon me, my dear mistress,” replied the maid, “I have been afraid to tell you; but undoubtedly you are to be removed from this Castle.”

“I shall not leave unless dragged away,” said Emmeline. “What makes you believe so?”

“I will shortly acquaint my lady,” said the maid. “There has been a messenger from the Queen, desiring your presence with your uncle at Guildford. My lord has been heard to say he would go in three weeks.”

“He must go alone, then,” said Emmeline ;
“I will never be so faithless. Oh ! what new disaster is coming upon us.”

“None, let us hope, my lady,” said the maid.
“Perhaps some agreeable surprise may await us at Guildford.”

“No, Anne,” answered Emmeline ; “it will be a sorry day if we leave this home ; yet you will not forsake me. Oh no, I am determined. I will obey my guardian in anything but this. I will be the companion of his lonely hours ; there must my obedience end. He shall not go ; it will be his death, and my complete ruin.”

As time wore on, Emmeline again resumed her post beside her uncle, whose recovery progressed steadily. No allusion was ever made to the past or to the future. Savoy began to flatter himself that the despised one was forgotten, and Emmeline, wondering at her uncle’s silence, almost concluded that her domestic was under some de-

lusion. One day passed so like another, that a weary depression hung over both guardian and ward. Both were anxious and thoughtful, yet neither had the confidence or courage to open their heart. There was a self-satisfaction in Savoy's bearing; a timidity seized his fair niece. Oh! hapless maid, your love's away. Those bright summer days are like the dreariness of winter's long night. Dream them peacefully away. In three short weeks your troubles again begin. Meanwhile, what startling events agitate the changing world. The vain conceptions of ambition are tottering in the zenith of their pride.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Where shall the lover rest,
Whom the fates sever
From his true maiden’s breast,
Parted for ever ?
Where through groves deep and high,
Sounds the far billow,
Where early violets die,
Under the willow.”

MARMION.

Two young men, influenced by diverse motives, embark on the sea of fortune. Both had been severed by fate from the object of their affection. De Meudon, vain of his rank and superficial attainments, was somewhat churlish at the ill-

success of a long-meditated love suit, especially when his rival was deemed an inferior. So, taking high ground, he desired to attain the goal of his desires as a right; while Sandford, calm under the rebuffs heaped upon him by Savoy, sought to earn his reward by perseverance in the path of duty.

“This is a surprise,” said De Meudon, as Sandford approached. “I should have esteemed a lady’s smiles preferable to our company. What do you require of us? It is not in my power to offer any post in this service.”

“Neither do I ask it,” said Sandford, determined not to provoke a second quarrel, if possible. “Presuming your march is directed to the Prince’s camp, I desire only to be conducted thither in safety. My Royal master may need my humble efforts.”

“I cannot refuse the protection you are entitled to demand,” said De Meudon. “Why leave

Pevensel? It is a subject of regret that your unnecessary incursion into the old Castle should have produced such results. Portevin was my father's valued servant."

"There is but little good unattended by some evil," replied Sandford. "It is a sad and unhappy consequence, though I firmly differ with you. The necessity of my acts no one could be better acquainted with than yourself. I have never questioned your assiduity in defending those battlements, neither should you disparage my efforts to render assistance."

"Which efforts have not produced the result that was hoped for," retorted De Meudon. "Savoy, I imagine, has spoken his mind plainly, or this march would not be graced with your presence. But this wretched murder is a turn of fortune; the lady might have been in France before this."

"Substantially incorrect; your words are cer-

tainly ill-timed," answered Sandford. "The Prince has my pledged word to return when Pevensel is secure. Savoy may have spoken harshly, but I have reason to know he is not so well affected in your favour as formerly."

"I am not blind to so patent a fact," said De Meudon, "though I do not attribute it to your influence."

"Nor can you," said Sandford. "Your name never passed my lips in my noble Lord's presence. We are each influenced by the same hopes, though taking a different road to reach them."

"Then I will try the shorter one," replied De Meudon. "It may be more hazardous, but, relying on the protection of the good saints, I deem it the most certain."

"I am aware of your design against Rochfort de Vere," said Sandford, "and can only pray that such zeal may not prove your destruction. There is great discretion needed in dealing with

a foe so powerful, and a man so dishonourable."

"You will not succeed in terrifying me," returned De Meudon, "even were the danger ten times greater."

"Neither do I desire to do so," said Sandford; "these are not times for terror, but for a fearless discharge of our duties. Look forward! here is an immediate need for our efforts."

At this moment, the levies came upon a small thicket, where the surrounding copsewood had been cut away, possibly for fuel or some similar object. A small patch was left which had not yet succumbed before the woodman's adze. It is probable that the man appointed to keep watch had fallen asleep at his post. No alarm was raised, and De Meudon's soldiers completely invested the snug retreat, making fifty or sixty prisoners before their presence was anticipated. These were the remnant of watchers left round

Pevensel, when the larger band departed for the wood near Guildford. The captives were sent on to Pevensel for safe custody, and deeming obedience to the Queen's commands no longer fraught with danger, Savoy sent a hearty congratulation to the young Knight on his success. It was a feather in the evenly-balanced scale of the noble Lord's vacillating mind, restoring all his old bias in favour of De Meudon with redoubled determination.

But following the line of march, it is only requisite to state that its track was a repetition of the course traversed by De Vere. On our hero's reposing at the City of Winchester, the sole occupation of the living was the burial of the dead. The widow bewails her husband, the mother her son, all is mourning, lamentation, and woe. After skirting the City of Oxford, the levies are passing Kenilworth some few miles to the left, when a shrill trumpet echoes from the

distant hills. All fly to arms, while the notes are prolonged with increased harshness. The archer prepares his bow ; the whole troop halt in line ; but as the flourish approaches with noisy clang they soon know it breathed no hostile defiance. It was a friendly welcome, awaiting the jaded and overtaxed warriors, who listen to the call. The word is given to advance, and after surmounting the hillock which intercepted his view, Sandford stood once more in the presence of the Prince ; while De Meudon was not a little ruffled at the favour with which his rival was received. A cheer from the vast forces which supported the Royal standard greeted their arrival, and at a little distance Conisburgh is receiving the blessing of the old woman Margot, who deems herself a presiding goddess over that young man's destiny.

“I rejoiced to learn that your efforts saved Pevensel from the grasp of the enemy,” said the

Prince, advancing to Sandford, and grasping his right hand between two extended palms. "I am just halting between two opinions ; the help of your genius may influence my determination. But how has Savoy received you ?"

"The latter question I shall leave to my liege's better leisure," replied Sandford. "If still honoured with confidence, I shall be glad to receive your commands for my further service."

"Your reception was unfavourable, that fall of the eye assures me. We will speak of it presently," said the Prince. "I am searching for the forces that left Pevensel, hesitating whether to intercept them or to attack Leicester at Hereford."

"I am tolerably clear as to their present haunts," returned Sandford, "and my liege will grant me six hours for deliberation."

The Prince simply nodded assent as Sandford withdrew. The elasticity of that young man's

spirit was fully revived by this short interview with his royal master. His late rebuffs are forgotten, and those hopes once regarded as wild and impossible seem to rise gradually to a lofty pinnacle ; the summit of a tower, erected stone by stone from the solid rock of probability. Savoy might be stern and resolute, but his only prejudice can be summed up in one brief sentence—the want of rank. Could not that obstacle be removed? Could he entrap the forces now encamped before Kenilworth, then, in the position he had already attained in the Prince's estimation, why should he not venture to ask some favour? Six short hours must determine; as many minutes must suffice for consideration. So interrupting Margot in the utterance of some prophecy concerning Conisburgh's future happiness, Sandford beckons them both aside.

“Is this my lordling with whom your lot is cast?” said Margot, addressing Conisburgh as

Sandford approached. "He is the child of fortune, a star that can shine through the darkest cloud. It was a happy day when first you met."

"Our first acquaintance was a piece of good fortune, I admit," replied Sandford. "He is a faithful man, and if fate still keeps its upward course I will be a good master."

"He may be your servant, but no man's slave," returned Margot; "his own master, blessed with wealth disgorged by the unwilling earth. His evil days are gone—all is bright—he rides on a golden cloud."

"Well, good mother, supposing we dispense with these oracular demonstrations for the present. Can you answer a plain question?" said Sandford. "Are not those forces that besieged Pevensel regaling themselves at Kenilworth?"

"For what was I born—to chastise the evil deeds of wicked men?" answered Margot. "In old Winchester I saw more citizens murdered in

a day than three could bury ; at Kenilworth they rest, drinking their malmsey like rain water from a thunder cloud."

"It is as I anticipated," replied Sandford. "Have they any prisoners?"

"There is one luckless swain condemned to be strangled at to-morrow's dawn," said Margot. "His name I know not ; neither the hour of his birth or the cloud of his destiny, though perchance it may be developed in the evening sky."

"That is strange, unless he is a deserter," returned Sandford. "Was he strongly guarded?"

"The lazy loons are too well engaged in riotous pastimes," replied Margot. "He is in a tent, lashed to a post ; the saints are yet callous to his prayers, for, as the dark clouds cast their gloom upon the tent, he exclaims, "Poor little Una!" and when the sun shines, in solemn tones he mutters still, "Poor little Una."

Though little Una is an old acquaintance to the

reader, she had to enlist Sandford's sympathies as a total stranger. The appeal which the small mention of her trouble conveyed was not made in vain. It had often been the young man's lot to protect the weak in the hour of sorrow. His heart was ready, nor was his fertile brain less tardy to devise the means.

"Come, good mother," said Sandford, continuing to address Margot, "We must release this unhappy captive; you can assume as many different shapes as the clouds; return to the enemy's camp dressed as a peddler, then throw off your disguise. The prisoner can pass out in the assumed clothes, and you in usual costume."

"Say yes to that, good mother, and earn my endless thanks," said Conisburgh. "I will accompany you to the four cross roads at the edge of the wood, there I will await your return."

"I could refuse nothing that you ask, though demons of darkness barred the way, and bid me

return," answered Margot. "The wind blows strong from the west, while the clouds fly eastward; we go at once. The heavens bless our good works. I am sworn to revenge."

"And who may be the object of your wrath?" enquired Sandford.

"The fiend of Hurstingham. I am his evil angel," answered Margot. "His destruction is all that I am allotted to perform on earth. His death is near, and with that, my days are numbered."

"I hope you will live long enough to see his end," replied Sandford, "though I never can believe he will live to repent."

"Let him perish body and soul with all his vile slaves," returned Margot. "The spirit of my beloved son yells. The ghost of Portevin haunts him when the night owl shrieks from yonder tower. I go—I go—fair Una, if alive, dry your sorrowful tears, or if numbered with the dead let your spirit aid my revenge."

“Stay, mother!” said a voice soon recognised as De Meudon’s, who must have overheard the previous conversation, and makes his appearance from behind the shelter of a neighbouring tree. “One question before you depart, that is if you are determined to attempt this act of madness—is De Vere still in the camp.”

“A life-like representation of him occupies a tent towards the setting sun,” replied Margot. “The long shadows of the castle spread an ominous gloom upon it; they deepen as the red gleam fortells the coming night—some will soon be stretched low upon that fatal spot.”

Without waiting for any reply, Margot retired to effect the change of costume. A large cap enveloped her head, the long black hair being concealed beneath its capacious folds; an ample surcoat hanging to the heels hid her tattered garments, which doubled to the waist, barely reached to the knee. The lower parts of her legs

were wound with two long strips of leather resembling a bandage, and in these motley habiliments she mounted a fiery steed, a second animal carried Conisburgh, who would take charge of both when they reached the cross roads. Breaking into a light canter, they disappeared in the woods, leaving the two rivals to await their return.

“This dilatoriness is criminal,” said De Meudon, “the hostile army is before us, and should be attacked at once. Who is this Una that we waste time in idle efforts to save her lover. But having accomplished one murder, you are probably concocting some folly that will lead to another.”

“My plans are not framed to suit your impetuous ideas,” replied Sandford. “The Prince awards me six hours to suggest a plan of operations. I claim my right to uninterrupted discretion during that interval ; afterwards you may

question them if you please—as regards Una, I know as much about her as you do; certainly my curiosity is excited, and the discovery of this mystery may very likely solve all our doubts.”

“My royal liege’s condescension turns your brain,” replied De Meudon, “what man in his senses would plan a campaign at the suggestion of a wench whose sweetheart has been strangled.”

“If your judgment was equal to your valour, my services would not be needed,” returned Sandford. “Should your bosom burn for an early display of courage, the Prince will readily listen to any proposals. Go and seek him.”

“If I was his pampered favourite, he might be willing to trust me,” said De Meudon, sarcastically, “as it is, my faint voice would be scattered to the winds—my proper influence in that quarter you have already usurped.”

“As such are your sentiments,” returned Sandford, “enjoy them until my time is expired. I am not careful to answer you any further.”

At this juncture Sandford departed to partake of refreshment. Then calm and unruffled he sat on a soft bank of grass, until Margot or some intelligence of her movements arrived. Two circumstances particularly pressed upon his mind, first, the mystery of Una, which he dismissed for the present as inexplicable; then the evident regret displayed by the Prince at Savoy's discourtesy; though both considerations were only little passing thoughts, destined to meet a final solution in moments more opportune. His attention is soon turned to his rival, who in a feverish excitement wanders to and fro, in manner so agitated that Sandford began to imagine the young knight contemplating some personal revenge upon himself. Where shall that neglected lover find peace?—alone! where, a dew-spangled

willow weeps upon the turfy ground. Though the modest violets of spring are replaced by the latest flowers of summer, yet it is a placid and lonely spot.

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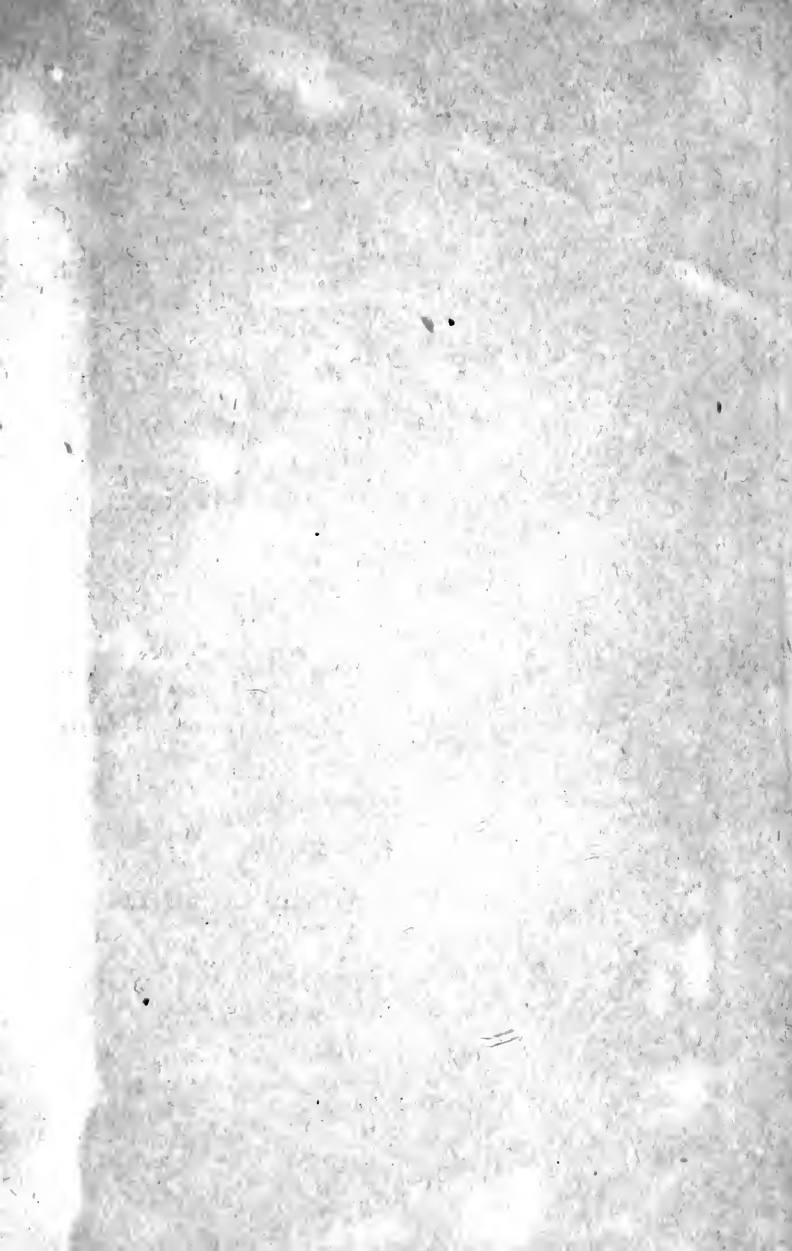
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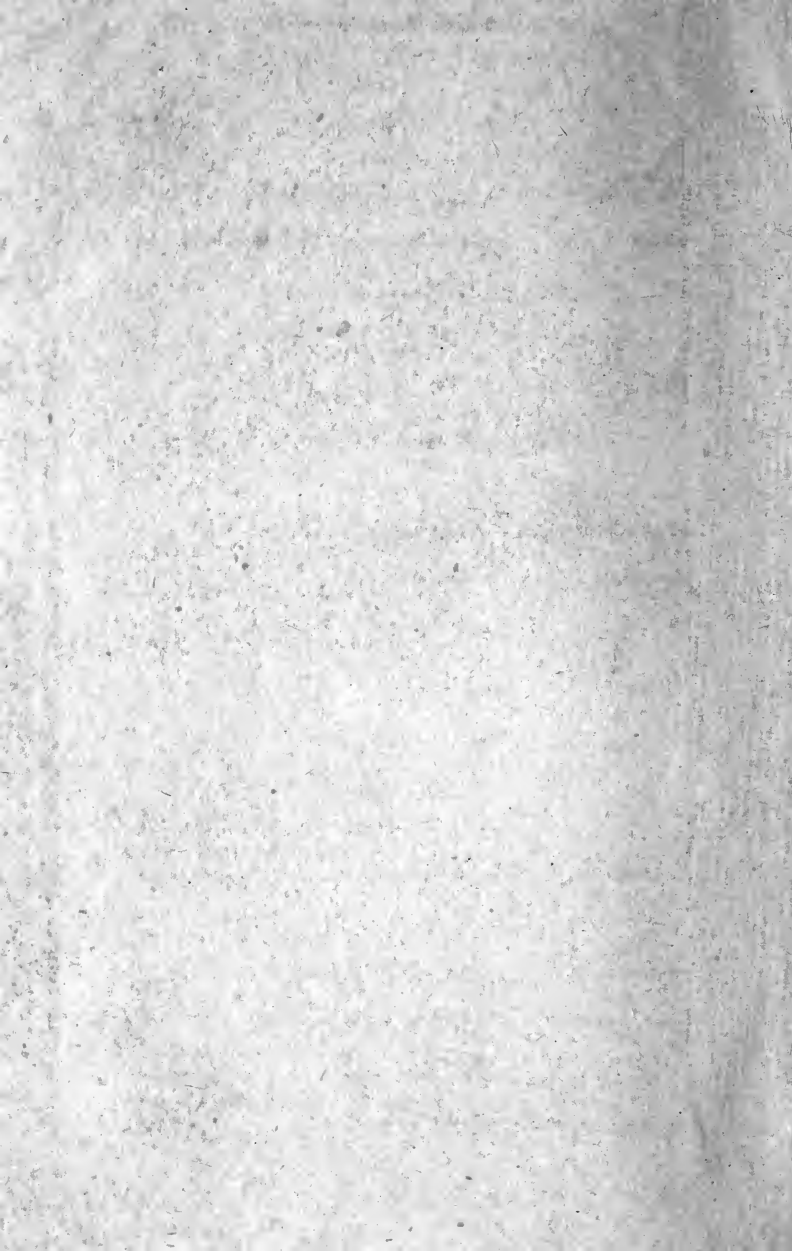
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